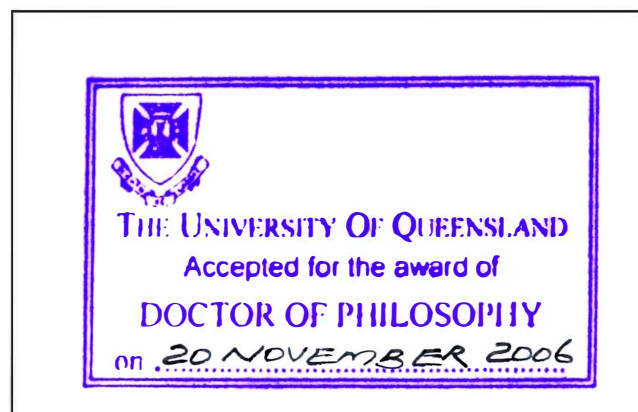


**‘Our Wayward and Backward Sister Colony’:  
Queensland and the Australian Federation  
Movement, 1859 – 1901**

**by**  
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University of Queensland in March 2006.



Except where acknowledged in the customary manner, the material presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, original and has not been submitted in whole or in part for a degree from any University.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials 'KM' followed by a large, circular flourish.

Katherine McConnel

## **Acknowledgements**

On the bus to work some months back I had the startling revelation that my doctorate had several points of reference with the Australian Federation Movement – the lengthy period of its gestation, several phases of concentrated activity and inactivity, oppositional and supportive forces and personal changes. That I could make these associations was a clear sign that indeed I had been studying the topic for far too long. Many people have therefore contributed over the years to the final completion of this thesis.

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Bernadette McNevin; no one has filled me with more pride and joy, my deepest thanks.

## **Abstract**

The historical account of Queensland's record in the Australian federation movement constitutes one of the unresolved 'dark spots' of the movement's historiography. The Queensland pattern of participation in the federal process was contemporarily described as being 'somewhat different to the other colonies'. This departure from the conventional emphasis on the movement's 'progress' towards the inevitable attainment of nationhood has resulted in most accounts 'gloss[ing] over the Queensland chapter.' The principal objective of this thesis is to construct a more complete understanding of Queensland's involvement in the movement towards the political federation of the Australian colonies.

The catalyst for the analytical approach adopted by this thesis was Brian de Garis' 1972 assertion that there were 'six federation movements rather than one, and the march of each colony towards the inauguration of the Commonwealth needs to be 'placed' in the context of its own history.' Building on this premise it is argued that the federal movement was a distinct yet peripheral movement that intersected with the internal political and social dynamics of each colony. The discrete nature of these colonial contexts therefore shaped the course of the movement in each colony rather than the movement itself being an overarching and altering force. This thesis is not a detailed account of the negotiations between the colonies but a contextual analysis of the Queensland matrix of social, political and economic factors that the broader movement for political federation negotiated.

As the idiosyncratic quality of Queensland's involvement originated in the political culture that developed consequent to the colony's late settlement and attainment of self-government, this thesis has taken the colony's 1859 separation from New South Wales as its start date. The particular features that emerged from the colony's developmental process and assumed wide-ranging significance were the colony's decentralised pattern of settlement, the influence of regionalism and the importation of Pacific Island labour. The notable derivatives of these factors were the enduring coloured labour question, the advent of separatist demands in Central and North Queensland and the politicisation of white labour. These

domestic issues had both a local and intercolonial impact on the consideration of the federal question and therefore are a focal point of this thesis' examination.

Broadly stated this thesis' fundamental argument is that Queensland's indifference to and inconsistency in the federal movement was a consequential result of the colony's political and populist fixation on the rapid development of its vast resources, which prompted a series of volatile political and social issues. In essence Queensland was too preoccupied with its own internal matters to consider the development of a peripheral movement. Yet, alternatively these domestic Queensland issues galvanised the federal movement in the other Australian colonies by presenting a concrete practical issue that required federal action. The final convolution in the Queensland account was that the principal domestic impediments to the colony's consideration of the federal question in the late 1890s, the separation and labour movements, emerged as decisive factors in Queensland's narrow affirmative vote to enter into the federal compact.

This thesis does not promote a 'Queensland is different' or more important or instrumental argument, but rather portrays the complexity of the federal story within the dynamics of one colony. In reinstating the individualism of the Queensland account it presents a more workable understanding of Queensland's 'paradoxical' performance.

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## Abbreviations

<i>AJCP</i>	Australian Joint Copying Project
<i>JQLC</i>	Journals of the Queensland Legislative Council
<i>MLA</i>	Member of Legislative Assembly
<i>MLC</i>	Member of Legislative Council
<i>NSWPD</i>	New South Wales Parliamentary Debates
<i>QPD</i>	Queensland Parliamentary Debates
<i>QSA</i>	Queensland State Archives
<i>QVP</i>	Queensland Votes and Proceedings
<i>SAPD</i>	South Australian Parliamentary Debates
<i>VPD</i>	Victorian Parliamentary Debates



# Introduction

To the accompaniment of 'the boom of cannon, military pomp and splendour, the waving of a myriad of flags, [and] triumphal processions' the six Australian colonies officially federated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1901 to create the 'world's newest nation' the Commonwealth of Australia.<sup>1</sup> The inauguration of the indissoluble political union between the six hitherto separate and autonomous colonies was contemporarily acknowledged as 'the greatest event that has ever happened to Australia in all its hundred years of history'.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, a body of literature developed to record how this nationally defining event came to pass.

A distinguishable feature of the historical accounts of the Australian Federation Movement, as the historians Geoffrey Bolton and Duncan Waterson have observed, is the tendency of 'most accounts of the coming Federation...to gloss over the Queensland chapter'.<sup>3</sup> No manifest reason is offered, within the conventional accounts, to explain the application of an interpretative framework that has resulted in Queensland's story becoming 'one of the dark spots in the history of federation'.<sup>4</sup> To determine what set of variables sanctioned the cursory coverage of Queensland necessitates an examination of how the movement itself was contemporarily portrayed and the relation that this had on the subsequent historiographical process. In charting the establishment of an inherent criterion, which graded colonial participation in the movement on the basis of conformity to the 'mainstream', the consequent limitations in the historiography will be outlined

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<sup>1</sup> 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 2 January 1901; 'The Commonwealth of Australia', *Ibid*, 1 January 1901.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Commonwealth "Courier"', *Ibid*, 1 January 1901.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Bolton and Duncan Waterson, 'Queensland', Helen Irving, (ed.), *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*. Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 1999: 93-127.

as a means to define the approach and rationale of the thesis. The underlying premise of this thesis is that the conventional historiographical approach has, by design, extracted the federation movement from the context-dependent environments of each of the Australian colonies. Yet, it was within these geographically and politically bounded communities that the federal idea was considered, ignored and decided upon. As the historian Brian de Garis acknowledged in 1972:

the story in each colony was different. In a sense there were six federation movements rather than one, and the march of each colony towards the inauguration of the Commonwealth needs to be 'placed' in the context of its own history.<sup>5</sup>

To construct a practical understanding of Queensland's part in the political movement to create a federal system government is the purpose of this thesis. It is not a detailed account of the negotiations between the colonies but a contextual analysis of what sort of community Queensland had been, was and was becoming, and how the federal idea interacted with this distinctive environment.

The shortcomings in the coverage of Queensland's involvement in the federation movement cannot be attributed to a lack of interesting features. On the contrary, 'no colony...[wa]s more brimful of questions' than Queensland and these parochial issues fashioned a dynamic colonial response to the federal initiative.<sup>6</sup> This response however resulted in Queensland's participation in the federal movement being contemporarily described as 'especially lukewarm', 'wayward and backward'

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Jenkins, 'Attitudes Towards Federation in Queensland', Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Queensland, 1979: vi.

<sup>5</sup> B.K. de Garis, 'Some Reflections on the Problems Involved in Writing a History of the Australian Federation Movement,' *Early Days: Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society*, 7: 4 (1972): 29-35.

<sup>6</sup> 'An Australian M.P. Some Colonial Problems', *Daily Chronicle*, 22 January 1894, 'James. G. Drake Papers UQFL 96', Fryer Library, University of Queensland .

and 'somewhat different from that of the other colonies'.<sup>7</sup> Such distinctions served not to highlight the idiosyncratic qualities of the Queensland situation but only to mark it as deviating from the movement's purported orthodoxy.

A core dynamic of the federal scheme was its conceptualisation as a national movement cultivated through repeated 'appeals to the sentiment and patriotism of Australian Unity'.<sup>8</sup> The rhetorical underpinning of this was the subjective emphasis on Australia's purported geographical unity, ethnic homogeneity and cultural uniformity.<sup>9</sup> The main implication was that Australia was destined by its geographic and socio-political sameness to become one nation - 'all our paths converge towards union'.<sup>10</sup> The 'imagined community' of Australia was an aspect dwelt upon in the speeches and literature on the federal topic and was epitomized in the movement's slogan 'One People, One Destiny'.<sup>11</sup> The implied extension of this blend of sentiment and idealism was that the six Australian colonies were moving in unison towards the inevitable goal of a united Australia. Much credence was attached to the rendering of federation as a national movement and it ultimately functioned as the central view or category against which 'alternatives' were marginalised. It was however an artificial construct. Moreover, it was counter-factual, as by design it endeavoured to overlay and therefore obscure the reality of

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<sup>7</sup> Sir James Garrick to Sir Samuel Griffith, 16 September 1896, 'Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1894 - 1900. MSQ 189', Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney ; Sir George Turner cited in *Speeches on Australian Federation by the Premiers of Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia. Mr Deakin and Lord Brassey*. Melbourne: Messers Geo Robertson and Co, 1899: 11; 'Press Cutting', 3 September 1899, 'James Dickson Papers: OM 67-13', John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland .

<sup>8</sup> Undated clipping from *Table Talk*, UQFL 13/57, 'George Essex Evans Papers UQFL 13', Fryer Library, University of Queensland, Brisbane .

<sup>9</sup> Douglas Cole, "The Crimson Thread of Kinship": Ethnic Ideas in Australia, 1870-1914,' *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 14: 56 (1971): 511-23.

<sup>10</sup> Sir John Cockburn, 'Federal Constitution: Resolutions, 10 March 1891', *Official Report of the National Australasian Convention Debates: Sydney, 2 March to 9 April, 1891*. Sydney: George Stephen Chapman, Acting Government Printer, 1891: 203.

the Australian situation in which there existed significant geographic, economic, social and political differences between the colonies. More decisively, there existed an enduring suspicion, rivalry and jealousy amongst the Australian colonies engendered by the geographical distances between them and the distinctive process by which each had been settled and developed. As the historian H.L. Harris phrased it “the crimson thread of kinship’ ran through them all but it did not bind them together....In short the spirit of narrow provincialism had developed’.<sup>12</sup>

In the Australian context, the extent of provincialism was such that each of the colonies regarded themselves as the administrators of their own ‘national existence’.<sup>13</sup> Six separate national entities proved a formidable barrier to the fostering of an overarching Australian nationalism. The Brisbane labour weekly the *Worker* therefore sceptically asked in July 1899: “For Australia!” What is Australia....Under existing conditions, it is nothing more than five syllables of wind.’<sup>14</sup> Isolationism was an associative trait of the colonies’ separate identities. In alignment with each colony’s identification of themselves as a distinct country each treated their neighbours as a foreign state. This aspect of colonial relations was profiled in the first edition of the *Commonwealth* in 1894, as a significant problem that federation would optimistically abolish:

At the present time it is an undoubted fact that notwithstanding our community of origin, language, and religion, a feeling of alienism is rapidly developing in each colony against persons coming from other colonies.

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<sup>11</sup> At the banquet to mark the occasion of the 1891 National Australasian Convention Sir Henry Parkes proposed the main toast of ‘One People, One Destiny’. It was increasingly employed as the slogan for federation appearing in literature and on badges, flyers and banners.

<sup>12</sup> H.L. Harris, *Australia in the Making: A History*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1940: 294.

<sup>13</sup> ‘A New View of Federation’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1898.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Federation, Higgs and the Bulletin’, *Worker*, 1 July 1899.

Such new-comers are often regarded as strangers and intruders. Now, this fatal tendency would be checked, if not destroyed by Federation.<sup>15</sup>

The most compelling testament to the pervasive and enduring force of separatism was the pragmatic adoption of federalism as the political system that best suited the Australian conditions. The aim of a federal system, Karl Cramp outlined:

is to bring together under a political bond a number of States without sacrificing their individuality. The States still retain their separate existence and independence in some particulars, though they surrender their powers to a central government in matters that affect the Federated States in common.<sup>16</sup>

A federal system of governance accommodates existent regional differences by recognising the rights of the component areas to continue their individual characters.<sup>17</sup> The manner in which this is practically implemented is through the creation of two spheres of political rights and two spheres of citizenship, colonial/state and federal. Federalism, as a contemporary described it is 'a ship of State with two keels.'<sup>18</sup> Defining the boundaries of the federal sphere was the fraught and protracted phase of the Australian deliberations. The dominant motif in the extensive debates on the federal idea was the sanctity of each colony's independent and autonomous existence.

The formidable influence that provincialism had on the federal cause was formally acknowledged at the 1891 National Australasian Convention. To appease the self-protective traits of provincialism four resolutions were introduced by the president of the Convention, Sir Henry Parkes to 'establish an enduring foundation for the

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<sup>15</sup> The *Commonwealth* was a publication of the Australasian Federation League. *Commonwealth*, 1 October 1894 cited in R. Norris, *The Emergent Commonwealth. Australian Federation: Expectations and Fulfilment 1889-1910*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1975: 31.

<sup>16</sup> K.R. Cramp, *The State and Federal Constitutions of Australia*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1914: 106.

<sup>17</sup> K.W. Robinson, 'Sixty Years of Federation in Australia,' *Geographical Review*, 51: 1 (January 1961): 1-20.

<sup>18</sup> Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, 'The Federal Constitution of Australia,' *Fortnightly Review*, 75 (January - June 1901): 969-88.

structure of a Federal Government'.<sup>19</sup> The first of these Parkes claimed was 'imperative'

to satisfy the mind of each of the colonies that we have no intention to cripple their powers, to invade their rights, to diminish their authority....that neither their territorial rights nor their powers of legislation for the well-being of their *own country* will be interfered with in any way that can impair the security of those rights, and the efficiency of their legislative powers.<sup>20</sup>

Given that the federalists were required, through necessity, to formally accommodate the individualism of each of the six Australian colonies to advance the cause of federation, we might expect that this decisive feature of the movement would be addressed in the historical accounts of federation. The recognition of the independence of these colonial societies would provide the essential context for understanding the complexity of the processes through which nationhood was achieved. The initial body of literature on the federal cause, however, did not incorporate such a focus. Rather, it followed in tenor and style the conceptualisation of federation as 'the inevitable ultimate welding of these colonies into "one people one destiny."' <sup>21</sup> The complexity of the multiple realities within the Australian context was largely expunged from the collective national account of the celebrated moves that shaped the destiny of Australia.

A distinguishing feature of the collection of works that developed on the federal achievement in the first two decades of the Commonwealth was the proportion that were written by the prominent 'actors in the political drama' that had resulted in the federation of the colonies.<sup>22</sup> These personal accounts and memoirs built

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<sup>19</sup> Sir Henry Parkes, 'Federal Constitution: Resolutions', 4 March 1891, *Official Report of the National Australasian Convention Debates: Sydney, 2 March to 9 April, 1891*: 24.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> 'The New Order', *Brisbane Courier*, 1 January 1901.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Gyles Turner, *The First Decade of the Australian Commonwealth. A Chronicle of Contemporary Politics 1901-1910*. Melbourne: Mason, Firth, & McCutcheon, 1911: ix; John Cockburn, *Australian Federation*. London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1901. Digital text version: <http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/fed/>; W. Harrison



upon the official chronicle of the federal movement, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth* by John Quick and Robert Garran, published in 1901. The drawback to this distinction however was that the selection and depiction of events offered by these triumphant federalist's had an enduring influence for they remained under examined by Australian historians. This was a problem allied with the embryonic state of Australian history as a professional discipline.

Encumbering the process of writing the history of the Australian Federation Movement were a variety of problems that were associated with the slow development of Australian history as a professional discipline. A core reason for this slow development was the generic absence amongst Australians of an historical consciousness of their own past. In 1883, the distinguished British historian, James Froude was struck by the Australian lack of historical awareness during his tour of the colonies.<sup>23</sup> A decade later Flora Shaw, drawing on her much celebrated Australian tour, declared that:

It has been said that Australia is uninteresting because she has no past; but the interest of Australia lies forward, not behind....She alone of all the continents has no history. So be it! She is content.<sup>24</sup>

The apparent lack of a past prompted little demand for the establishment of a specialised field in Australian history. Thus in 1913 the historian A.C.V. Melbourne

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Moore, *The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia*. London: John Murray, 1902. Digital text version: <http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/fed/>; B.R. Wise, 'The Struggle for Union: Episodes in the Movement for Australian Federation. Part 1,' *Lone Hand*, (1 August 1912); B.R. Wise, *The Making of the Australian Commonwealth 1889-1900: A Stage in the Growth of the Empire*. London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1913; Sir George Reid, *My Reminiscences*. London: Cassell & Co, 1917; Alfred Deakin, *The Federal Story: The Inner History of the Federal Cause*. Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1944. The inclusion of Deakin's account in this collective is based on the fact that it was written at the close of events though not published until 1944 Deakin never revised the manuscript after he completed it in September 1900 - three months before Quick and Garran completed their 1000 page volume.

<sup>23</sup> 'Aspects of Australian History', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 October 1923 cited in 'Press Clippings', Gall Collection, UQFL 43/G/280, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

<sup>24</sup> Flora Shaw, 'The Australian Outlook,' *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, 25 (January 1894): 137-65.

beseeked that 'it is time that Australian history was taken seriously by Australians'.<sup>25</sup> History, as a specialised discipline, was on the curriculum of Australian universities but not until 1927 did there exist a specific subject or field of research in Australian history.<sup>26</sup> The subject however generally remained unappealing, except to a small vanguard of honours students, until the 1950s. This factor proved to be a significant and compounding problem in the development of a historiography of federation.

Though 'Australia, a Nation' or similarly named chapters were incorporated into the general history texts of Australia immediately after 1901, the majority were not written by Australian based or trained historians.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the initial detailed studies on Australian federation were largely produced overseas. The 1907 publication, *The Early Federation Movement in Australia* was written for example by the Canadian Cephas Allin.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the only doctorates submitted on the topic of Australian Federation in this early period, were submitted by two candidates at the University of Paris.<sup>29</sup> At a more fundamental level, the absence

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<sup>25</sup> Melbourne, 'Methods of Historical Research': 18.

<sup>26</sup> The first full-time course in Australian history was offered in 1927 however no full-time lecturer in the subject was appointed until 1948. Stuart Macintyre, 'The Writing of Australian History,' D.H. Borchardt and Victor Crittenden, (eds.), *Australians: A Guide to Sources*. Sydney: Fairfax, Syme, and Weldon Associates, 1987: 22.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Finney, *The History of the Australian Colonies*. Sydney: W.A. Gullick Government Printer, 1901; J. Grattan, Grey, *Australasia Old and New*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1901; T.A. Coghlan, *The Seven Colonies of Australasia*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1902; Arthur W. Jose, *History of Australasia: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day, with a Chapter on Australian Literature. 3rd Edition Revised and Enlarged*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1909; A. Wyatt Tilby, *The English People Overseas. Volume V. Australia 1688 - 1911*. London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1912; Ernest Scott, *A Short History of Australia*. London: Oxford University Press, 1916; F.L.W. Wood, *A Concise History of Australia. Revised Edition*. Sydney: Dymocks Book Arcade, 1944.

<sup>28</sup> C.D. Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*. Kingston, Ontario: The British Whig Publishing Company, 1907.

<sup>29</sup> French academic work on Australian Federation was an extension of the interest shown towards the topic particularly from 1897 when federation seemed likely to succeed. Initially, the forthcoming federation prompted discussions over the need to formulate a strategic regional plan to safeguard French interests in the Pacific. Georges Biard d'Aunet the French Consul General in Sydney anticipated that Australian unity was likely to result in the growth of Australia's 'desire for outside expansion...and its ambition to reign over the Pacific will take a menacing dimension.' The advantages of Federation were however the main basis of French interest. France supported the process of centralisation as Australia's first step towards severing the links with Great Britain. Independence from Britain would furnish the means of developing more direct and closer links with Australia, especially in trade. Edouard Picard, 'La Federation Australeinne', unpublished Doctor of Letters

of a specialised field of research in Australian history poses questions of the standard of the earlier body of historical work. Of particular concern was the general practice of drawing heavily on testimony or first hand experience to overcome the absence of a body of documentation.<sup>30</sup>

A.C.V. Melbourne outlined the dynamics of the problem in 1913. In a paper presented at the inaugural meeting of the Historical Society of Queensland, Melbourne essentially denounced the value of the existent body of work on Australian history:

Brilliant literary men have attempted to write history. The results of their efforts have often been valueless, because their facts are wrong. Their authorities were unreliable; they did not make use of original sources of information. They depended upon secondary authorities; men who did not write disinterestedly....The consequence is that their work, while being literature, is not history....All attempts which have been made to write the history of Australia so far have failed. Either the evidence of contemporary documents has been insufficiently made use of or the historian has allowed himself to reflect a distorted view of the past, and a view the truthfulness of which has been destroyed by his own partiality.<sup>31</sup>

The salient issue that Melbourne was contesting was the standard of objectivity in historical writing. In the first phase of publications on the federal topic this is a pertinent concern. The core body of authors were politicians who had also been

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thesis, University of Paris, Sorbonne, 1900; Rene Guyon, 'La Constitution Australeinnne de 1900', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Paris, Sorbonne, 1902; Ivan Barko, 'French Perceptions of Australian Federation,' *New Federalist*: 7 (June 2001): 32-43.

<sup>30</sup> In 1887 Henry Parkes unsuccessfully advocated the establishment of a State House, which would include 'a suite of rooms suitable for the proper keeping and exhibition of such archives, records and memorials of the colony as may hereafter be collected and preserved.' Parkes recognised a connection between documentation, historical writing and the development of an Australian historical consciousness: 'If ever we were to become a great people it would only be by feeling that we had a history, and if we were ever to feel that we had a history the ideas must inculcated upon the youth of the country.' It is not however until the early 1920s that South Australia became the first state to establish an archive for the systematic deposit of the state's official records. Investigations by the Commonwealth government led to the preparation of a bill in the 1920s but it was not until the post World War II era that a national archive was created for the systematic collection and preservation of Australia's historical records. Queensland appointed an official archivist in 1959; it was the last State to do so. Parkes cited in Luke Trainor, *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism: Manipulation, Conflict and Compromise in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 169; Macintyre, 'The Writing of Australian History': 17; Geoffrey Bolton, 'Duncan Waterson: A Lapidary Historian,' *Journal of Australian Studies*, 66 (September 2001): 9-19.

<sup>31</sup> A.C.V. Melbourne, 'Methods of Historical Research,' *The Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, 1: 1 (1913): 17-24.

key figures in the federal movement. Undeniably, these personal accounts on the internal workings of the movement are valuable to the student of history - this was their acknowledged purpose. Bernhard Wise stressed in his 1913 publication, *The Making of the Australian Commonwealth 1889-1900: A Stage in the Growth of the Empire* that:

This is not a *historie documentee* of the movement towards Australian Federation, (that should be the work of an Australian University), - nor another study of the constitution, nor a memoir, but the record by an eye-witness of the making of the Commonwealth during the critical period from 1889 to 1900, which aims at giving to a later generation a more vivid picture of that time.<sup>32</sup>

In the preface of *The First Decade of the Australian Commonwealth*, Henry Gyles Turner reflected on the historical value of a contemporary record:

It is generally held that personal predilection, or unconscious bias, renders an impartial review of contemporary history an all-but-impossible task....The setters-forth of those facts, "the hodmen of literature" are not without their value to the philosophic student, who, in another century, may seek to work out the harmonious relations of cause and effect in connection with national development.<sup>33</sup>

Fundamentally, the accounts of the 'federation fathers' are narrative historical documents, as they were not written 'disinterestedly'.<sup>34</sup> They are coloured not only with an inevitable contemporary bias to promote/record the historical significance of the federal movement but also by the personal inclination of the authors to assert their own key involvement, and often their colony's, in the 'political drama'.<sup>35</sup> The problem that developed with these texts is that they long-remained the principal accounts of federation. A more detailed examination of the federal process, drawing on these and other sources and written with the assistance of a

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<sup>32</sup> Deakin also left it 'to the student of the future to comprehend and criticise their work...to digest and comprehend its significance and the circumstances of its adoption.' Wise, *The Making of the Australian Commonwealth 1889-1900*: iii; Deakin, *The Federal Story*: 3.

<sup>33</sup> Turner, *The First Decade of the Australian Commonwealth*: vii.

<sup>34</sup> Melbourne, 'Methods of Historical Research': 18.

<sup>35</sup> Turner, *The First Decade of the Australian Commonwealth*: ix.

degree of distance from the event did not eventuate for seven decades after the inauguration.<sup>36</sup>

A significant contributor to the void in the federal historiography was the formidable bearing that Australia's participation in World War I had on the Australian perception of their nationhood. The poignancy of the symbolism ascribed to 'the grand epic of our part in the Great War', particularly Australia's 'baptism of fire and bloodshed' on the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1915, was such that it superseded the inauguration of the Commonwealth as a more definitive representation of Australia's achievement of nationhood.<sup>37</sup> 'A nation's born where the shells fall fast' wrote the poet Henry Lawson.<sup>38</sup>

The interface between military conflicts and the forging of national entities and identities is a dynamic feature of the histories of all nation states. Australia's nationhood had however 'not come to birth under pressure of war' but was built 'under peaceful skies' and though this attribute was rhetorically praised it failed to engender an emotional sense of national unity or greatness.<sup>39</sup> Discernible in

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<sup>36</sup> In 1972 John La Nauze, Professor of History at the Australian National University published *The Making of the Australian Constitution* and this 'general history of the federal movement' comprised the first detailed examination since the Quick and Garran's volume in 1901. Alternatively the publication in 1999 of *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation* was portrayed as 'the first comprehensive, general history of Federation to be written.' In many respects this was an accurate description for its approach was more broadly based and inclusive than previous attempts to examine federation. Yet the limitations of La Nauze's approach on the political course do not detract from its positioning as the first significant monograph since Quick and Garran's 1901 volume. A number of biographies of the prominent men in the movement had been produced along with a series of journal articles and an edited collection of papers, in general only particular elements of the movement were examined. J.A. La Nauze, *The Making of the Australian Constitution*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972: v; 'Dust jacket', Irving (ed), *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*.

<sup>37</sup> James Drake, 'All But Forgotten. A Soldier of the Great War: Major General Sir Edward Thomas Henry Hutton K.C.M.G. First General Officer Commanding the Military Forces of the Commonwealth 1901-04,' 96/96 Box 1 'James G. Drake Papers UQFL 96'; 'Editorial', *Age*, 25 May 1915 cited in Richard Ely, 'The First Anzac Day: Invented or Discovered?', *Journal of Australian Studies*: 17 (November 1985): 41-58.

<sup>38</sup> Henry Lawson cited in Ian Turner, 1914-19', Frank Crowley, (ed.), *A New History of Australia*. Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1974: 337.

<sup>39</sup> Though peaceful, war or military terminology permeated through the Queensland's 1899 referendum campaign. The press regularly referred to the Federation 'warfare', 'conflict' or 'battle' and in which 'the enemy' 'took the field' and 'wounds' were sustained. 'A True Nationalist', 'Letter to the Editor', *Morning Bulletin*, 17

Professor G.A. Wood's overview of 'our political story', presented in his 1914 introduction to Karl Cramp's *The State and Federal Constitutions of Australia*, is a palpable sense that there was a missing element in Australia's history and in the federal achievement:

The political story of Australia is not an obviously interesting story....There have been no wars of conquest, for a handful of people were dowered with a continent; no wars of defence, for the continent was protected by the fleet of Nelson....The great battles of freedom had been already fought and won before Australia came of age....Our story has not been the story of a people striving to be free....We miss the great battles for great causes; the heroisms and the martyrdoms; the inspiration of the lives of famous men.<sup>40</sup>

War was the revered marker of history and thus Australia's involvement in 'their first great war' was accorded particular significance.<sup>41</sup> The heroics of the first Australian Imperial Forces engendered a 'thrill of [national] pride', which fashioned a collective self-definition and identity.<sup>42</sup>

Gallipoli! Gallipoli! A name –  
A name? A people's coronet! A signed  
And sealed certificate of nationhood.<sup>43</sup>

Australia's then Prime Minister William Hughes unequivocally endorsed war as the dominant symbol of nationhood: 'Australia became a nation...We had earned that, or, rather our soldiers had earned it for us.'<sup>44</sup> The nationalist tradition created through the public commemoration of war summarily displaced the political formation of nation.<sup>45</sup> The federal topic, as a result, was largely consigned to the

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August 1899; Sir Samuel Griffith quoted in 'The Commonwealth of Australia', *Brisbane Courier*, 1 January 1901.

<sup>40</sup> G.A. Wood, 'Introduction', Cramp, *The State and Federal Constitutions of Australia*: xiii-xiv.

<sup>41</sup> C.E.W. Bean cited in K.S. Inglis, 'The Anzac Tradition,' *Meanjin Quarterly*, 24: 1 (1965): 25-44.

<sup>42</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 May 1915, cited in Kevin Fewster, 'Ellis Ashmead Bartlett and the Making of the Anzac Legend,' *Journal of Australian Studies*: 10 (June 1982): 17-30.

<sup>43</sup> These are the first lines of Barlett Adamson's winning poem in the 1915 'Gallipoli Competition'. Adamson cited in Ely, 'The First Anzac Day: Invented or Discovered?': 53.

<sup>44</sup> Quote cited in Patricia Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*. Melbourne: McPhee Gribble Publishers, 1994: 220.

<sup>45</sup> That no public holiday marks the 'birth of our nation' demonstrates the marginal status that federation holds in the Australian collective memory. Alternatively, the enduring force of Anzac Day is portrayed in its promotion as a more universally accepted date in the debate over whether Australia's official national day the 26<sup>th</sup> January should be moved. 'Queensland Calls for Debate on Australia Day Date', *Australian Associated Press*, 25 January 2005; 'Australia Day - What Does It Tell Us About Our Identity?', *Studies of Society and*

margins of the national story or as Geoffrey Blainey aptly phrased it, the subject became 'a no man's land in Australian history'.<sup>46</sup> Without scrutiny the interpretation presented in the early works on federation was preserved as the true and orthodox account of the federal movement.

Celebratory or triumphal in tone and purpose these texts were heavily imbued with the prevailing nineteenth century concept of 'Progress'. They were, in the main, works that functioned as a fulfilment of an obligation to document and publicise the progressive unfolding nature of the federal movement towards the inevitable accomplishment of nationhood. The inherent problem with such terms of reference is that deviations from the dominant paradigm are often silenced. The Queensland case can be advanced as an illustrative example of this dynamic in that it can be argued that there is an evident correlation between the colony's 'somewhat different' involvement and the tendency to 'gloss over' Queensland's part in the movement.<sup>47</sup> The general brevity of space allocated to Queensland in the accounts of federation is not however an isolated incident. A similar fate has befallen Western Australia, Tasmania and to a lesser extent South Australia. Arguably, a significant contributor to this ostensible bias is that New South Wales and Victorian statesmen wrote the majority of the early accounts on the federal movement and introduced the themes for much subsequent work.<sup>48</sup> Within these texts considerable weighting was placed on detailing and promoting the key contribution that the author's own colony made. In his preface Bernhard Wise

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*Environment*: 2 (2000): 19-30; Pip Wilson, 'Don't Pulp Our National Day!,' *Bulletin*, 116: 6006 (23-30 January 1996): 24.

<sup>46</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, 'The Role of Economic Interests in Australian Federation: A Reply to Professor R.S. Parker,' *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 4: 15 (1950): 224-37.

<sup>47</sup> 'Press Cutting', 3 September 1899 'Dickson Papers'; Bolton and Waterson, 'Queensland': 95.

<sup>48</sup> A Queensland participant in the federal movement did not produce a monograph on the topic. The 'Random Recollections' of James Drake a prominent Queensland federalist and the Commonwealth's first Postmaster General was the lone offering from Queensland. 'Random Recollections' Drake Papers UQFL96/99.

made this point quite apparent: 'If the narrative appears to Australians to move too much in New South Wales, they, also need to be reminded that this was the pivotal Colony of the Australian group, and that in no other was there any contest.'<sup>49</sup> At its core such partiality was symptomatic of the enduring rivalry and jealousy between the Australian colonies. Against this backdrop the construction of a single cohesive version of the federal movement, which covered the process by which the federal union was achieved between a group of colonies identifying themselves as six separate countries, was logistically a patently difficult task.

The approach adopted to minimise the evident tensions between the existent provincialism and the inspired sentiment of nationalism was a focus on the formal political negotiations between each colony's political leaders, undertaken principally during the 1890s at the various intercolonial meetings, conferences and conventions on the federal question. The result was a narrative of the making of the Australian Constitution, which established a chain of political events or markers that delineated the movement's progress towards its objective. It was therefore heavily imbued with the idea of national destiny and the growth of national sentiment. Such a viewpoint afforded little scope for the detailing of the separate internal colonial issues that shaped a colony's response to the federal idea or for the consideration of the workings of a significant opposition. In effect the federation movement was artificially lifted out of the individual dynamic settings of the six Australian colonies to establish a 'shared' national narrative. Evaded were the complex antecedent forces and factors of each colony's distinctive political culture.

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<sup>49</sup> Alternatively Alfred Deakin warned his readers to allow for an inevitable bias of his viewpoint as essentially Victorian. Wise, *The Making of the Australian Commonwealth 1889-1900*: iii; Deakin, *The Federal Story*: 9.



The 'Historical Introduction' to Quick and Garran's 'monumental tome' *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth* was the exemplar of the consultative forum approach, but it did nevertheless furnish the most detailed and arguably the most objective of the early accounts of Australia's federal history.<sup>50</sup> Though neither were historians, a distinctive feature of the collaboration between these two eminent lawyers and significant participants in the federal movement was that John Quick was from Victoria and Robert Garran from New South Wales. This ostensibly tempered the rivalry between the two colonies for pre-eminence in their account of federation.<sup>51</sup> Their volume has long been regarded as the 'Book of Authority' on federation, yet approached from the perspective of the smaller colonies its subjective selection of the political markers to illustrate the movement's progressive character effectively negated variations, and upheld the leading role of the larger colonies in the federal drama.<sup>52</sup> The absence of an authoritative counter voice to Quick and Garran's 'historical exegesis' and the 'narratives' of key federalists, in conjunction with the general neglect of the topic by historians ensured, by default, that this restricted focus on the intercolonial negotiations became the template for analysis.<sup>53</sup> Its interpretative influence remains decisive.

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<sup>50</sup> At 1000 pages Quick and Garran's volume was an acknowledged reference text for lawyers for its commentary on the federal Constitution it is unlikely therefore that it was a widely read by the general public. John Quick and Robert Randolph Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of The Australian Commonwealth*. Sydney: 1901 Edition Reprinted by Legal Books, 1995: viii; Robert Randolph Garran, *Prosper the Commonwealth*. Melbourne: Angus and Robertson, 1958: 138.

<sup>51</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald's* review of Quick and Garran's volume in December 1900 considered that 'every page of this large volume bears witness to the energy and discriminating care which they have brought to bear on their task.' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 December 1900, cited in Sir Maurice Byers, 'Foreword to the 1995 Reprint', Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*.

<sup>52</sup> The terms smaller and larger colonies were contemporary distinguishers based not on geographical size but on population statistics. Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia were regarded as smaller colonies and New South Wales and Victoria larger. Geoffrey Sawer, 'Foreword', Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: v-vi.

<sup>53</sup> James A. Thomson, 'Quick and Garran's Australian Constitution in Retrospect,' *The New Federalist*: 1 (June 1998): 74-77.

Despite significant developments in the study of Australian history, historians continue to adopt a framework of analysis, as the historian Bryan Jamison argued, that largely follows the 'orthodox contours of writing on the history of federation, with the intercolonial conferences and conventions of the 1890s providing the primary staging posts for their extended narratives.'<sup>54</sup> The essentially static character of the analytical approach to the federal topic consequently offers little scope to redress the partiality shown towards the smaller colonies and to what was assessed to be non-conventional. Identifiable in the standard treatment of the federal movement are three elements that continue to enforce its delimiting qualities. First, an enduring focus on the 1890s period; second, an emphasis on the larger colonies and thirdly, the avoidance of internal provincial circumstances, which at crucial times significantly affected events.

There has been a manifest trend in the federal historiography to concentrate on the 1890s as the decade that constituted as Robert Garran phrased it, the 'real federation movement'.<sup>55</sup> Taken as a whole, this decade did represent the most concerted and productive phase of the federal movement yet its pre-eminence in the federal story belies the movement's longevity and equates to examining the end without exploring the beginning or middle. Quarantining the 1890s is at odds with the contemporary view of the movement's protracted existence. In 1881, the journalist John Henniker Heaton satirically commented that he would like to entitle a paper 'A History of the Thousand-and-one Attempts and Failures to bring about

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<sup>54</sup> Bryan Jamison, 'Review Article: Helen Irving (ed.) *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Helen Irving, *To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997,' *Journal of Australian Studies and Australian Cultural History*, Special Joint Issue. 65 (2000): 213-15.

<sup>55</sup> R.R. Garran, 'The Accomplishment of Federation', *Brisbane Courier*, 1 January 1901.

Federation in Australia.<sup>56</sup> Ten years later, Sir Henry Parkes remarked in the opening debate of the 1890 Federal Conference that:

The first thing that occurs to me is that most of us have little thought how old a question this subject of federation really is amongst us. I have been really surprised myself, in going back to the earlier records, to find that it was the child — the fondled child — of the greatest men we ever had in any of the colonies.<sup>57</sup>

Continuity was an additional element that was increasingly emphasised, for it demonstrated past progress and conferred an historical lineage and therefore authenticity to the federal movement. A recurrent feature in significant speeches, editorials and publications on the federal question in the 1890s was a review of the 'history of the Australian Federal movement'.<sup>58</sup> This attention established a line of progress from all 'past' proposals for some form of Australian union to the 'present' consideration of the federal question. The general perception was therefore, as a 1900 publication outlined, that 'the Federal story is a long one — one is almost afraid to say just when the beginning was'.<sup>59</sup> Quick and Garran confirmed that the federal 'roots penetrate deep into the past' by locating the 'Germ of Federation' in Governor Fitzroy's 29<sup>th</sup> September 1846 despatch.<sup>60</sup> This was, the authors argued, 'the first recorded suggestion of the need of some central intercolonial authority'.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> J. Henniker Heaton 'Discussion' cited William J. Harris, 'The Commercial Advantages of Federation,' *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, 13 (March 1882): 231.

<sup>57</sup> Sir Henry Parkes, 'Union of the Colonies', 10 February 1890', *Official Record of the Proceedings and Debates of the Australasian Federation Conference, 1890*: 33.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Baker, *A Manual of Reference to Authorities for the Use of the Members of The National Australasian Convention*. Adelaide: W.K. Thomas & Co., Printers, 1891: 4; For example: Parkes, 'Union of the Colonies', 10 February 1890', *Official Record of the Proceedings and Debates of the Australasian Federation Conference, 1890*: 33; 'Hon. A.J. Peacock at Corowa' Appendix B *Official Record of the Federation Conference held in the Courthouse, Corowa on Monday, 31st July, and Tuesday, 1st August 1893*. Corowa: James C. Leslie, Printer, 'Free Press' Office, 1893: xi-xv, 69; Henry Parkes, 'Australian Federation,' *Centennial Magazine*, 2: 8 (March 1890): 631-34; Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, 'The Road to Australian Federation,' *Contemporary Review* (London), 57 (February 1890); P.F. Rowland, 'Australian Federation: Its History, Character, and Possibilities,' *MacMillan's Magazine*, 84 (June 1901): 151-60.

<sup>59</sup> 'Federation', Alcazar Press, *Queensland 1900: A Narrative of Her Past Together With Biographies of Her Leading Men*. Brisbane: W.H. Wendt & Co, 1900: 177-79.

<sup>60</sup> Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: vii, 79.

<sup>61</sup> Quick and Garran 'shrewdly suspect[ed]' that as Governor Fitzroy had only recently taken up his appointment in Australia that Edward Deas Thomson New South Wales' Colonial Secretary had been the originator of the suggestion that 'it would be very advantageous to their [the colonies] interests if some superior functionary were appointed'. C.D. Allin in his work on the early federation movement concurred that

From this professed starting point, Quick and Garran proceeded to outline the evolution of the movement through a chronological review of the various manifestations of the federal question in the lead up to 'the great effort at Federation'.<sup>62</sup> Each episode (though separated by time) was placed on a continuum linking all prior considerations of the federal scheme and the 1890s. This trend of tracing the 'gradual evolution' of the federal idea was at variance to the far narrower timeframes proposed by the various participants' in their federal accounts.<sup>63</sup>

The 'Federal Beginnings', the New South Wales politician and federalist George Reid submitted, occurred at the November 1883 Australasian Convention in Sydney:

This gathering of Australasian statesmen had two main objects in view, the extension of British annexations and protectorates in the Western Pacific, and the establishment of a Federal Union of limited scope as the beginning of greater things.<sup>64</sup>

Alternatively, the South Australian federalist John Cockburn claimed in 1900 that 'the period occupied in the gestation of the Commonwealth has been eleven years.'<sup>65</sup> Bernhard Wise was in agreement and explained that:

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Fitzroy's suggestion 'contained the embryo of the federal movement' but substantively advanced on Quick and Garran's suspicion of Deas Thomson involvement and bestowed on him the lavish title of 'par excellence the Father of Australian Federation.' John Ward, in his 1950 article supported Allin's proposition that Deas Thomson's played a prominent role however he questioned the validity of Deas Thomson's call for a central authority to regulate commercial relations as constituting the first enunciation of 'the principle of a federal unity in the Australian colonies.' He cited the advocacy of a 'general confederacy' outlined in an April-May 1842 article entitled 'Union of the Australasiatic Colonies into a General-Governorship' as the first record of the necessity of federation. Alternatives for 'the genesis of Australian Federation' were the 31<sup>st</sup> July 1847 despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies Earl Grey who proposed the establishment of a 'General Assembly to deal with matters of common Australian interest.' *Pugh's Almanac* advanced William Charles Wentworth's 1848 efforts to include in the Constitution of New South Wales a provision that enabled the colonies to federate 'whenever ready and willing to do so.' *Ibid*: 79 80; Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*: vii, 54-55; John Ward, "The Germ of Federation' in Australia,' *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 4: 15 (1950): 214-23; *Pugh's Almanac 1900*: 77.

<sup>62</sup> Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 115.

<sup>63</sup> G.A. Wood, 'Introduction', Cramp, *The State and Federal Constitutions of Australia*: xiii.

<sup>64</sup> Reid, *My Reminiscences*: 50.

<sup>65</sup> Writing in 1900, Cockburn was therefore identifying Parkes' Tenterfield address in 1889 as the start point. It was not only participants who favoured this narrower timeframe: Henry Gyles Turner stated that 'the prospect

On October 24, 1889, Sir Henry Parkes made the great speech, which...marks in decisive fashion the beginning of a new era in Australian politics. Others before him had advocated Federation; but he was the first who made his appeal directly to the patriotism of the people; so that, from this day forward, the desire for Union, which had floated before men's minds as a vague aspiration for many years, took definite shape.<sup>66</sup>

Such opinions constructed an artificial divide between all previous efforts in the cause of federation and the new 'higher movement'.<sup>67</sup> That the principal chroniclers of the federal movement were most active in 1890s arguably presents a viable motive for favouring this period. Historians however, from the first analytical interest in the federal topic engendered by the commemorative impulse of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inauguration in 1951 to the present, have most commonly adopted Parkes' 1889 Tenterfield Address as the springboard for the historical examination of the federal movement.<sup>68</sup> As a result, the 1890s are conventionally accepted as the 'usual period for the study of federation'.<sup>69</sup> Certainly, during the 1860s, 1870s, and to a lesser extent the 1880s the federal idea had a 'painful and languid existence' yet to entirely disregard the 'early' federal endeavours distorts the historical account.<sup>70</sup> Broadly stated it obscures the

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of amalgamating the interests of the six colonies...had been dangled before the community for more than a dozen years.' Cockburn, *Australian Federation*: 13; Turner, *The First Decade of the Australian Commonwealth*: 1.

<sup>66</sup> A.G.L Shaw has questioned the importance of Parkes' famous Tenterfield Oration and cites the fact that the speech was not widely reported and further when it was reported there was little acknowledgement or appreciation of its significance. The *Sydney Morning Herald* for example gave more prominence to the speed of the express train that bore Parkes back from Tenterfield rather than to the content of Parkes' speech. Additionally, the Victorian paper the *Argus* described the language of the oration as 'delightfully glowing but provokingly vague.' Federalists alternatively saw in the speech an indication that Parkes and by extension New South Wales was finally prepared to cooperate with the other colonies to advance federation. Wise, *The Making of the Australian Constitution*: 3; A.G.L. Shaw, 'Centennial reflections on Sir Henry Parkes' Tenterfield oration. -1889. Nan Phillips Memorial Lecture (3rd: 1989: Canberra): *Canberra Historical Journal*, 25 (March 1990): 2-10.

<sup>67</sup> Sir Hugh Nelson, 'Address in Reply. 27 January 1897', *Federal Council of Australasia. Seventh Session, 1897. Official Record of Debates*. Hobart: Printed at *The Mercury* and *Tasmanian Mail* Office, 1897: 14.

<sup>68</sup> Refer to La Nauze, *The Making of the Australian Commonwealth*: 6; Norris, *The Emergent Commonwealth: Australian Federation: Expectations and Fulfilment 1889-1910*; Garran, *Prosper the Commonwealth*. ; John Reynolds, *Edmund Barton*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson Publishers, 1979; Kathleen Dermody, *A Nation at Last: The Story of Federation*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Services, 1997; An emphasis on the 1890s is evident in the six colonial chapters of *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*.

<sup>69</sup> Winsome Roberts, 'The Politics of Federation,' *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, 27 (2000): 7-27.

<sup>70</sup> William Foster was New South Wales' Agent General in London. William Foster, 'Fallacies of Federation,' *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, 8 (January 1877): 79-115.

evolution of the federal idea from an idealistic vision to that of practical politics. Additionally, it conceals the dynamic and enduring impact that the Australian process of colonial settlement and development had on the federal question. More specifically the focus on the later phase of the movement displaces and devalues the contribution of those developments that occurred in the preceding decades.

The perfunctory treatment of the 1886 formation of Australia's first federal body, the Federal Council of Australasia, is the clearest example of the diminutive status accorded to earlier developments. From the Queensland perspective this is especially problematic, for Queensland laid claim to being 'the parent of the 'national' movement in Australia' based on its key role in activating the process that led to the establishment of the Federal Council.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the inaugural January 1886 session of the Federal Council was declared to be 'the first beat of a national pulse'.<sup>72</sup> Yet in the federal historiography, as Professor La Nauze outlined, 'it is customary to look back on its [the Council's] existence...as fruitless'.<sup>73</sup> The historical accent on the Council's lack of legislative results has obscured the overarching fact that in November 1883 a unanimous agreement, between all the colonies, was for the first time reached on the question of federation and this constituted the movement's most significant and practical advancement after more than thirty years of advocacy. To the Melbourne correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the significance of the 1883 achievement was such that he declared that 'when the history of this epoch comes to be written, this first

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<sup>71</sup> 'An Australian M.P. Some Colonial Problems', *Daily Chronicle*, 22 January 1894, 'James G. Drake Papers UQFL 96'.

<sup>72</sup> James Service, 'President's Speech', 25 January 1886, *Federal Council of Australasia. Session 1886. First Session of the Council. Official Record of Debates*. Hobart: Printed at *The Mercury* and *Tasmanian Mail* Offices, 1886: 11.

beginning of comprehensive Australian nationality will occupy several chapters.<sup>74</sup> Contrary to this contemporary expectation the extraordinary circumstances that brought about, in November 1883, 'the most remarkable meeting that has ever taken place in these Australian colonies' occupies little more than a brief acknowledgement in the federal story.<sup>75</sup> This can largely be accounted for by the succession of the 'real federation movement', which has marginalised this period of the movement's history. Yet, at odds with this is the almost universal coverage given to the June 1883 linkage of the railway systems of Victoria and New South Wales. The symbolism attached to the 'iron wedding' between the two larger colonies was such that it was claimed to be 'the first step towards welding the Australian colonies as one great nation' but as an event it did not substantially alter the prospects of the federal movement.<sup>76</sup> That the 'extraordinary undertaking' of Queensland's Premier Sir Thomas McIlwraith in April 1883, acknowledged as the catalyst for the concerted colonial action on the federal question, has been allocated less space in the federal account than the New South Wales/Victoria rail union highlights a significant discrepancy and/or bias.<sup>77</sup> Other antecedents to federalism have been similarly devalued. Certainly, the independent and unprecedented action taken by Queensland in attempting to annex the eastern half of New Guinea to prevent 'the Island being taken possession of by a foreign power' does not bear the hallmarks of a federal initiative. In fact it was an action

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<sup>73</sup> Though La Nauze did acknowledge that the Federal Council was 'a body whose existence has some significance for the present study' its coverage within his 'general history of the federal movement' was anecdotal. La Nauze, *The Making of the Australian Constitution*: 2-3.

<sup>74</sup> 'Our Melbourne Letter', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December 1883.

<sup>75</sup> 'Editorial', *Times*, 19 January 1884.

<sup>76</sup> 'The Makers of the Colonies. No.II – The Hon. James Service', *Review of Reviews*, 1:5 (1892): 126-130; 'New South Wales and Victorian Railways. The Albury-Wodonga Junction', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 1883.

<sup>77</sup> Of the conventional accounts that covered this period of the movement no reference was made to the indictment against Queensland. See for example Quick and Garran *The Annotated Constitution of The Australian Commonwealth*: 110-11; Harrison Moore's, *The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia*: 30-

that portrayed the strength and utility of colonial individualism rather than demonstrating any need for a federal body to coordinate colonial action on matters of mutual concern. Yet, as a result of Queensland's 'adventurous' act (or more particularly the Imperial Government's refusal to sanction the annexation) two key matters emerged that would propel the federal idea from an idealistic vision to that of practical politics: specifically, the issue of defence and an escalating antagonism over Queensland's maintenance of a coloured labour force.<sup>78</sup> There is a distinct correlation between these two factors and McIlwraith's declared and suspected motives. As is discussed below (Chapter 3), McIlwraith consistently argued that his action was one of defence to thwart German designs in New Guinea. The suspected ulterior motive was that he undertook the annexation solely to obtain a new field for the recruitment of coloured labour.<sup>79</sup> The unresolved nature of this 'startling' event within the standard account of federation, in conjunction with Queensland's associated claim that it was the 'parent' of the federal movement, is the basis for the New Guinea annexation and the establishment of the Federal Council being a particular focus area of this thesis.<sup>80</sup> The objective is to coalesce the complex and diverse elements of Queensland's domestic political situation, McIlwraith's renowned 'bold, prompt, and masterful' style of leadership; increased French activity in the Pacific; the public campaign by British and Victorian humanitarian/religious groups against Queensland's labour

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31; Alfred Deakin, *The Federal Story*: 11-13; H.L. Harris, *Australian in the Making: A History*: 298-299. Refer to Charles Dutton, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 26 November 1884, *QPD*, 44 (1884): 1584.

<sup>78</sup> 'Editorial', *Times*, 17 April 1883.

<sup>79</sup> Pacific historians have placed great credence in the theory that McIlwraith's annexation of New Guinea was a purposeful act intended solely to supply 'black' labour for Queensland's labour depleted sugar industry. Roger Thompson however acknowledged that this motive was consistently disavowed by McIlwraith and by most historians. The historical accounts that claim the primacy of this motive have generally considered the annexation in isolation of the broader Queensland political context. Key factors in Queensland's prevailing political environment, introduce alternative contentions to the question of whether labour recruitment was the foremost or sole motivation. Roger C. Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era 1820-1910*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980: 55; Clive Moore, *New Guinea: Crossing Boundaries and History*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003: 145.



policies; the British Government's anti-Imperialist policy and its establishment of successive enquiries into labour recruitment with McIlwraith's 'precipitate' action.

This approach is particularly pertinent as no Queensland federalist furnished an account of the movement and therefore the merit of Queensland's action has been reliant on the assessment of the other colonies.<sup>81</sup> An inclination 'to be a little censorial with regard to the conduct of Queensland' was a feature generally noted by Queensland's premier Sir Hugh Nelson in 1897.<sup>82</sup> The judiciousness of this statement is largely corroborated by the larger colonies' account of the events of 1883.<sup>83</sup> The Victorian record acknowledged Queensland as the provider of the necessary stimulus for federal action, yet the greater emphasis was placed on the November 1883 Federation Convention or more particularly the decisive work of their premier James Service. Deakin therefore claimed that 'it was Mr. Service's Convention, in fact as well as in name, for he supplied it with all its motive power and material.'<sup>84</sup> New South Wales, in contrast, suspected the motives of Victoria,

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<sup>80</sup> 'An Australian M.P. Some Colonial Problems', *Daily Chronicle*, 22 January 1894, 'James G. Drake Papers UQFL 96'.

<sup>81</sup> Oscar de Satge, *Pages From the Journal of a Queensland Squatter*. London: Hurst and Blackett Ltd, 1901: 247; Sir Henry Parkes to Lord Selbourne, 19 November 1883, 'Sir Henry Parkes Correspondence', A870 - 932: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales .

<sup>82</sup> Sir Hugh Nelson, 'Address-in-Reply', 27 January 1897, *Federal Council of Australasia. Seventh Session*, 1897:14.

<sup>83</sup> Of the conventional accounts and general histories that covered this period of the movement no reference was made to the ulterior motive laid against Queensland despite it featuring prominently in the press and the Imperial Government's decision. See for example Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of The Australian Commonwealth*: 110-11; Harris Moore, *The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia*: 30-31; Alfred Deakin, *The Federal Story: The Inner History of the Federal Cause*: 11-13; H.L. Harris, *Australia in the Making: A History*: 298-99.

<sup>84</sup> The promotion of Service was especially problematic for the Queensland based historian A.C.V. Melbourne. In 1927 Melbourne derided Quick and Garran's 'completely misleading' statement with regard to who called the Federal Convention in Sydney: 'If it is necessary to apportion the credit for bringing the conference together, it is well that this should be done accurately, with an unprejudiced interpretation of facts....The joint authors of the annotated constitution....make no mention of the fact that Sir Thomas McIlwraith suggested the holding of an inter-colonial conference...[and] give Mr. Service all the credit. Even as recently as 2000 the bias towards Victoria remains in evidence. In John Hirst's briefest mention of the Federal Council he stated '1883 the Victorian Government launched a campaign for federation that produced only a very weak coordinating body'. Deakin, *The Federal Story*: 15; A.C.V. Melbourne, 'The Relations Between Australia and New Guinea, up to the Establishment of British Rule in 1888. Part II,' *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 13: 3 (1927): 145-72; John Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000: 1.

and though it voted for the Council's establishment it later refused to join the Federal Council which it branded 'a Victorian invention. As such it became a point of patriotism with many New South Welshmen to belittle and oppose it.'<sup>85</sup> The New South Wales account consequently evaded the whole episode by commencing its federal account with the 1889 initiative of its premier Sir Henry Parkes.<sup>86</sup> The centrality of the larger colonies in their versions was representative of an operational bias that was neither new nor specific to the historiography of federation. The *Queensland Figaro* reproachfully declared in early 1883 that:

There is one feature of all these federal schemes which crops to the surface. Our big neighbours always think of themselves as playing first fiddle in the Australian concert with all the little(!) colonies like Queensland keeping time obediently.<sup>87</sup>

In 1959, Professor La Nauze presented the broader historiographical ramifications declaring that 'any general account of Australia still seems more or less off-centre to any student outside New South Wales and Victoria.'<sup>88</sup> Alternative versions that concentrated on the role of the smaller colonies began to emerge under the commemorative impulse engendered by the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Inauguration of the Commonwealth.

In 1951 the subject of Australia's federation remained a 'huge, barely tapped field of research' despite the growing 'discovery' of Australian history as a legitimate and professional field of study.<sup>89</sup> In the cluster of interpretative work that was

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*: 17.

<sup>86</sup> James Service cited in H.L. Hall, *Victoria's Part in the Australian Federation Movement, 1849 - 1900*. London: Elliot Stock, 1931: 47.

<sup>87</sup> 'Is Queensland to be Federated?', *Queensland Figaro*, 3 February 1883.

<sup>88</sup> Geoffrey Bolton critically observed 'that Melbourne's pre-eminence came at the cost of a certain myopia, a tendency to assume that the intellectual templates of Melbourne, the Melbourne historical experience, held good for the whole of Australia'. Professor La Nauze cited in Alan Martin, 'The 'Whig' View of Australian History: A Document,' *Teaching History*, 16: 3 (October 1982): 7-25; Geoffrey Bolton, *The Kenneth Binns Lecture, 2005: The Problem of History*. [www.nla.gov.au/grants/haroldwhite/papers/gbolton.html](http://www.nla.gov.au/grants/haroldwhite/papers/gbolton.html), 2005.

<sup>89</sup> Blainey, 'The Role of Economic Interests in Australian Federation': 237; Macintyre, 'The Writing of Australian History': 22; Garis, 'Some Reflections on the Problems Involved in Writing a History of the Australian Federation Movement,' 29-35.

produced at this time on the federal topic, primarily at the journal article and thesis level, a modified approach emerged that both aided and hindered the development of a fuller understanding of the dynamic colonial elements associated with the federal achievement. The most noteworthy was the 1949/1950 article exchange between R.S. Parker and G. Blainey that asked new questions of the 'formation of our federation.'<sup>90</sup> Parker, based on his statistical analysis of the different colony's campaigns for the 1898, 1899 and 1900 referendums on the Constitution Bill, endeavoured to determine what it was that the popular majority voted for.<sup>91</sup> He concluded that 'the people in general...judged it [federation] not on a class basis, and not on a State right basis, but in terms of regional economic interest.'<sup>92</sup> Blainey in response had 'serious doubts whether the federal impulse is really dependent on the concurrence of...economic interests.'<sup>93</sup> Moreover, he argued:

Faced with an array of arguments, patriotic, political, economic, racial, personal, it is dangerous to simplify the electors' motives *without making a thorough study of the Federation campaign in particular localities*.<sup>94</sup>

The intrinsic value of this debate is not in the dispute over definitive causes, but its broader contribution in initiating further research work that applied a new set of interpretative paradigms to the federal topic.<sup>95</sup> In applying the points raised by

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<sup>90</sup> R.S. Parker, 'Australian Federation: The Influence of Economic Interests and Political Pressures,' *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 4: 13 (November 1949): 1-16; Blainey, 'The Role of Economic Interests in Australian Federation':

<sup>91</sup> The preliminary discussion of Parker's article examined the voting statistics from the referendums on the Constitution to determine the extent to which 'the people' were decisive in the achievement of federation. He concluded that the popular the expression of opinion at the referendums 'could hardly be considered overwhelming'. Statistically, 60.71 per cent of Australia's qualified electors voted on the adoption of the Australian constitution and of these 20 per cent were opposed. This led Parker to enquire what it was that the popular majority actually voted for. Parker, 'Australian Federation': 5-6.

<sup>92</sup> Parker stressed that he was not 'suggesting that the only motive force in this movement was economic.' *Ibid*: 12.

<sup>93</sup> Blainey, 'The Role of Economic Interests in Australian Federation': 229.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*: 237. Emphasis added.

<sup>95</sup> In the period after 1950 almost all works on the federal topic make at least a reference to the Parker/Blainey discussion or apply their arguments to the specific focus of study. The interpretative framework of Louis Green's 1951 Honours thesis 'The Queensland Attitude to Federation' drew heavily on Parker's economic contention. Reflecting the continued influence of the Parker/Blainey exchange, Alan Jenkins outlined in 1979 that it was 'the direct stimulation' for his thesis on Queensland's attitudes towards federation. Louis Green, 'The Queensland Attitude to Federation', Unpublished BA Hons. Thesis, University of Queensland, 1951; Jenkins, 'Attitudes Towards Federation in Queensland': vi.

Parker and Blainey, historians moved away from the collective national account and adopted a more colonial based focus.

On two fronts this proved problematic. First, there was a tendency by the smaller colonies in particular Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland to decisively offset the larger colony view and retrieve their colony from its marginal significance in the federal account. Through a decidedly subjective approach to the topic, substantive evidence was submitted to prove *their* leading or influential role in the movement. Two representative titles illustrate this objective, R.L. Reid's 'The South Australian *Influence* on the Proposals for Federation' and C.G. Austin's, '*Influence* of Queensland on Federation'.<sup>96</sup> What was presented in general was a set of broad statements based on a prejudicial selection of particular events. In the case of Queensland, Austin declared without elaboration that 'this State which had led the Federal Movement, now dropped to the rear' and that 'Queensland played as prominent part at the end of the Federal story as she had at the beginning'.<sup>97</sup> Three events were outlined: the 1883 New Guinea annexation, Sir Samuel Griffith's 1891 role in 'drawing up the first draft of the Australian Constitution' and the 1900 determined stand by Queensland's delegate to London James Dickson to have 'the right of appeal to the Privy Council'

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<sup>96</sup> Reid outlined that his principal concern was the 1897-98 Convention 'for it was here that South Australian *influence* was most felt. Moreover, it was where influence was of most importance'. While the 1950s commemorative period produced the largest group of works with such a focus it was not peculiar to this period. Two earlier undertakings were John McCay's 1926 article 'Cradle of Federation: Victoria's Great Part' and H.L. Hall's, 1931 book, *Victoria's Part in the Australian Federation Movement* the value of these works is limited by their overt bias to promote their colony's a factor further discussed with regard to Austin's article on Queensland. The most recent was John Bannon's 1994 *The Crucial Colony: South Australia's Role in Reviving Federation, 1891 to 1897*. R.L. Reid, 'The South Australian Influence on the Proposals for Federation,' *Royal Geographic Society of Australia (South Australia Branch) Proceedings*, 58 (December 1957): 97-110; Austin, '*Influence* of Queensland on Federation'; John McCay, 'Cradle of Federation: Victoria's Great Part', *Argus* supplement, 9 September 1926:10; Hall, *Victoria's Part in the Australian Federation Movement, 1849 - 1900*. ; John Bannon, *The Crucial Colony: South Australia's Role in Reviving Federation, 1891 to 1897*. Canberra: Federalism Research Centre The Australian National University, 1994. Italics added.

<sup>97</sup> Austin, '*Influence* of Queensland on Federation': 513.

incorporated into the Constitution.<sup>98</sup> Austin made no attempt to explain what factors contributed to Queensland's withdrawal from the federal movement; thus his overall contribution to the federal historiography is diminutive. The second problematic feature of the new interpretative focus was the further contraction of the period under examination from the conventional 1890s period to one specific event, typically a colony's referendum campaign.

Employing the same-targeted focus of Parker and Blainey, Louis Green limited his 1951 analysis 'The Queensland Attitude to Federation' to Queensland's September 1899 referendum on the Constitution Bill. Green stressed that his thesis was not an account of Queensland's contribution to the movement nor was it a description of the various historical stages but 'rather a picture of the complexion of public attitudes on the question *at the time* when Queensland decided to enter the federation.'<sup>99</sup> The idea that the referendum campaigns were the decisive events in the federation movement is an accurate but also a problematic supposition.

The referendum campaigns in each colony do notionally offer a discrete case study of the pivotal issues raised with regard to the federal question, as each was a colonially specific event. Yet such a concentration on a singular event necessarily separates it from the complexities of what has gone before. The antecedent forces and factors that determined the trajectory of the federal cause towards these specific events are as a result generally under-acknowledged. Green's analysis of Queensland's ten-week referendum campaign in 1899 did

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*: 509-514.

<sup>99</sup> Green, 'The Queensland Attitude to Federation': Preface.

present a 'reference to previous developments' but only if the issue was judged to have had a direct influence on the referendum results. Such a retrospective approach presupposes that only those events or arguments that had prominence in the referendum campaign shaped the outcome. Thus, because the question of territorial separation was 'more important' in Central Queensland during the referendum campaign it occupied the focus of Green's enquiry.<sup>100</sup> Relegated therefore were the significant and recurrent interactions between North Queensland's separatist demands and the federal movement.<sup>101</sup> Yet, when juxtaposed against the limited body of interpretative work available in 1951 on the developmental history of each colony, Green's analysis is notable for it introduced into the federal account the workings of some of the key idiosyncratic traits of Queensland's development; regionalism, coloured labour and separation.

The slow development of an Australian historiography did undeniably impede the initiation of a more comprehensive interpretation of the federal cause. The segmentation of the federal movement, by historians into manageable units such as the 1890s or the federal referenda was arguably a manifestation of the significant gaps that existed in Australia's historical knowledge. Brian de Garis accordingly noted in 1972 that:

One obvious reason why historians have been slow to come to grips with the federation movement is the sheer volume of research involved....The would-be historian of the federation movement could hardly be expected to carry out all the background research himself and until very recently little detailed work had been done on the history of the colonies in the late nineteenth century...but the years between 1860 and 1900 tended to remain the Cinderella of Australia historiography.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> By 1899 the North had concluded that federation would best serve their regional objectives. *Ibid*: 51.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*: 51-52.

<sup>102</sup> De Garis makes the point that the years 1860 to 1900 de Garis, 'Some Reflections on the Problems Involved in Writing a History of the Australian Federation Movement': 31.

From the 1960s, there did develop the interpretative basis for constructing the historical and political context of the colonies in the mid to late nineteenth century. In the body of work that was produced primarily from within the emerging subdisciplines of Australian history (that of social, race, labour and regional history), new and alternative versions were presented to the standard monumental account of Australia's history. To the historian John Hirst, the 'preoccupation' with these new fields of enquiry 'led to the abandonment by historians of any interest in federation whatsoever.'<sup>103</sup> Allan Martin corroboratively recalled that during the 1970s 'Federation seemed, for all but a few of us, a dismal and unexciting subject. So speculation did not continue.'<sup>104</sup> Indirectly, however, this period was of great assistance to the federal historian for the innovative modes of historical scholarship presented a new comprehensive basis for understanding the dynamics of the late nineteenth century. In essence they provided the foundational tools to construct a fuller treatment of the federal story than the conventional celebratory version. In the particularly neglected field of Queensland history the foundational work produced in this period by Geoffrey Bolton on North Queensland, Beverly Kingston on pastoral settlement and land policy; Duncan Waterson on the Darling Downs and Queensland politicians; Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin's on race relations and Denis Murphy on the labour movement delineated the matrix of dynamic forces that resulted from Queensland's process of colonial development: pastoralism, regionalism, sugar,

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<sup>103</sup> Bob Birrell also laments the effects of the 'revisionists' whose work 'often done with the best intentions...has produced a caricature of history.' John Hirst cited in Stuart Macintyre, 'After Corowa,' *Victorian Historical Journal*, 65: 2 (October 1994): 101; Bob Birrell, *Federation: The Secret Story*. Sydney: Duffy & Snellgrove, 2001: 1-2.

<sup>104</sup> Allan Martin, 'It Would be a Glorious Finish to your Life': Federation and Henry Parkes', David Headon and John Williams, (eds.), *Makers of Miracles: The Cast of the Federation Story*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000: 65-74.

coloured labour, separatism and labour.<sup>105</sup> The development of new perspectives on Australian and Queensland history did not however immediately influence the historiography of federation. These insights, particularly those of Queensland historians, have not yet been fully incorporated into a Queensland account of federation. Thus in 1979 the distinguished political scientist L.F. Crisp argued:

The fact is we have yet to produce a comprehensive and authoritative account of the Federation Movement of 1883-1901. J.A. La Nauze has given us his *The Making of the Australian Constitution*, a masterly 'standard work' on the actual constitution-making. But for the wider story we still do not have even some of the principal constituents. No senior Queensland historian has yet brought together the issue of personalities, the inter-House rivalries, the Kanaka issue in the sugar areas, the separation movements in Central and North Queensland, which contributed to making the Queensland Federation story distinctive.<sup>106</sup>

Almost anticipating this critique was Alan Jenkins' 1979 Master thesis 'Attitudes Towards Federation in Queensland'. Jenkins' comprehensive research and his integration of the key regional, social and labour dynamics with the question of federation constitutes the most significant contribution to topic of Queensland and Federation to date, an achievement that belies his narrow focus on Queensland's referendum and the accent placed on testing Parker's theory of the causal primacy of economic factors.

The only alternative to Jenkins' work has been the scholarly attention directed towards the role of Queensland's prominent political figures. Ross Johnston's

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<sup>105</sup> G.C. Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920*. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1963; Beverley Kingston, 'The Origins of Queensland's 'Comprehensive' Land Policy,' *Queensland Heritage*, 1: 2 (May 1965): 3-8; D.B. Waterson, *Squatter, Selector and Storekeeper: A History of the Darling Downs, 1859-93*. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1968; D.B. Waterson, *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972; Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, and Kathryn Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination. Third Edition*. St Lucia: University of Queensland, 1993; D.J. Murphy, R.B. Joyce, and Colin A. Hughes, (eds.), *Prelude to Power: The Rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885-1915*. Brisbane: The Jacaranda Press, 1970.

<sup>106</sup> McMinn also argued that it was 'because of the difficulty of steering a middle course between hero-worship and historical determinism is so great that no-one has yet produced a scholarly history of the Australian Federation movement'. W.G. McMinn, 'Some Observations on the Personal Element in the Federation



1963 Masters thesis 'The Role of the Legal Profession in Queensland in the Federation Movement, 1890-1900', examined the significance of the legal and idealistic contributions that were made to the federation movement by nine of Queensland's lawyer-politicians, with a particular focus on the 'very special role' of Sir Samuel Griffith. In the Queensland chapter of the historiography of federation Griffith has occupied 'the centre of our Federation mosaic' to an extent that Queensland's involvement in the movement largely equates to Griffith's 1891 triumph as being the principal draftsmen of the Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth.<sup>107</sup> Roger Joyce's biography of Griffith does concentrate on Griffith's federal work but this is offset by the insight given into his premierships and complex personality. In form and focus these works follow the 'orthodox' historical account of federation as the various federal conferences and conventions are the key connectors of these narratives.

At various stages individual historians began to pinpoint some of the restrictions inherent in the orthodox and post-1950 causal approaches to the topic of federation as a means of mapping a way forward to a more comprehensive account. Brian de Garis in his 1972 review of the problems involved in writing a history of the federation movement argued principally that the federal 'story in each colony was different'.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, he stressed the need to move beyond 'just the negotiations between premiers about federation' and the concentration on

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Movement, 1890-1894,' *Western Australia University Studies in History*, 4: 3 (1965); L.F. Crisp, *The Later Australian Federation Movement 1883-1901: Outline and Bibliography*. Canberra: 1979: i.

<sup>107</sup> This long held acclamation of Griffith's key role in drafting the Constitution has recently been challenged with Tasmania's representative Andrew Inglis Clark being advanced as the principal architect. J. Warner to Griffith, 15 March 1893, 'Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1891-1895. MSQ 188', Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales ; Richard Ely, 'Andrew Inglis Clark: Father of Australian Federation?,' *New Federalist*. 8 (December 2001): 33-34; John M. Williams, 'Race, Citizenship and the Formation of the Australian Constitution: Andrew Inglis Clark and the "14th Amendment",' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 42: 1 (1996): 10-23.

the referenda as a means to explain why the colonies federated and direct attention to the 'complex interaction of economic and social changes [and] the vagaries of local politics'.<sup>109</sup> In 1975 the New South Wales federal historian Rosemary Pringle rejoiced, prematurely from the perspective of the Queensland work that 'at last the economic interpretations of the federation movement are being knocked off their lone pedestal and the movement is being given the fuller treatment it deserves.'<sup>110</sup> Pringle argued that nothing was inevitable about federation, as it was required to negotiate 'the normal pattern of party and personal rivalries on which colonial politics were based.'<sup>111</sup> Any fuller explanation 'must keep the parliamentary scene in focus throughout the period.'<sup>112</sup> Twenty years later the matter of the historical approach of seeking a definitive cause of federation occupied the political scientist Glenn Rhodes. In his work on the federation referenda, Rhodes outlined the fallacies inherent in endeavouring to determine the specific causes or hierarchy of causes for 'it invites a simplified response...and over-simple answers inevitably fail to do justice to the complexity of the topic.'<sup>113</sup> The establishment of a satisfactory historical and political context was all-important to his examination of the voting returns of the various referendums as each was 'a spatially and temporally-specific event'.<sup>114</sup> Context and the individuality of each colony's method of integrating a national issue into the framework of colony's political, economic and social were the two core recommendations of these historians.

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<sup>108</sup> de Garis, 'Some Reflections on the Problems Involved in Writing a History of the Australian Federation Movement': 31.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Rosemary Pringle, 'The Federation Issue in New South Wales Politics 1891-99,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 21: 2 (August 1975): 1-12.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*:1.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*:12.

<sup>113</sup> Glenn Rhodes, 'The Australian Federation Referenda 1898-1900: A Spatial Analysis of Voting Behaviour', Unpublished PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 1988: 36.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*: 266.

The opportunity for a renewed effort developed in the late 1990s with the commemorative impulse engendered by the Centenary of Federation. A vast array of publications were produced on all manner of topics associated with federation. These ranged from pictorial depictions of Australian life in 1901 to documentary collections to biographies of prominent participants to the 'first comprehensive general history of Federation', *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*. Many of the more serious academic works remained tied to the orthodox approach; limiting the timeframe to the 1890s and preserving the 'larger state' view and consequently they present as predictable chronicles. From the Queensland perspective, Geoffrey Bolton and Duncan Waterson's chapter on Queensland in *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation* was the sole contribution in this period. Limited by the constraints of a chapter and acknowledging that 'much basic research has still to be done to supplement and revise the rather elderly theses of writers...on the Queensland federal movement and its opponents' the authors only managed to touch on many of the distinctive features of Queensland's involvement in the movement. Despite these efforts to fill the 'big black hole' in Australian history, Marian Simms argued that broad questions remain: 'What was the relative role of particular groups, classes and individuals in its construction? Did the process of constructing the Federation occur differently in the component parts?....These are some of the questions the Sesquicentenary of Federation may well be asked to answer.'<sup>115</sup>

This thesis aspires to address these questions in the Queensland context. Its central argument is that course undertaken by the Australian colonies towards

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<sup>115</sup> Marian Simms, 'Prophets with Honour': Federation Studies Reviewed,' *Labour History*, 83 (2002): Digital text version: <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals>.

political union needs to be examined from within each's individual colonial setting. It was within these distinct territorial units that each addressed, shelved and reconsidered the question of federation. Additionally this thesis claims the necessity of a period of study that extends from the first intersection of the federal topic with the domestic political arena in order to distinguish the origins and identify the development of distinctive patterns in the colonial contemplation of this nationally defining question. The central ambition is to present a regionally defined perspective to reconstruct a purported national movement as a colonial experience. The focus on Queensland is not underscored by a 'Queensland is different' argument. Certainly, Queensland's social and political background was different, but only in the sense that this applies to each of the other Australian colonies/states. All had differences in their political, social and economic arrangements, and their history.

Chapter 1 surveys the principal traits of Queensland's development in the first twenty years of self-government. The focus and style of the colony's early governments laid the foundation of enduring and distinctive Queensland policies and qualities. The early manifestations of the federal idea are overviewed in chapter 2. This discussion extrapolates from an 1879 article by Sir Henry Parkes on the federal topic. An intriguing feature of this article was Parkes' exclusion of Queensland from his proposed scheme for a partial federation. Chapter 3 examines in detail the domestic, intercolonial and Imperial factors concerned with Queensland's attempted annexation of New Guinea in April 1883 and argues for this episode's significance in the federation movement. The colonial reaction to the Imperial Government's refusal to sanction Queensland's action and the subsequent establishment of Australia's first federal body, the Federal Council of

Australasia is the focus of chapter 4. The premiership of Sir Samuel Griffith in particular his platform of liberal reforms and the intensity of the ensuing social, political and economic response are outlined in chapter 5. This matrix of local issues preoccupied Queensland in the late 1880s and into the 1890s and distinctly influenced the federal movement internally and in the broader intercolonial sphere. The final chapter explores the 1890s progress of the 'real' federation movement from the Queensland perspective and argues that while local issues continued to eclipse any consideration of the federal proposal, the broader question of federation exerted an influence on internal matters.

Uncertainty, indifference, and suspicion were recurrent motifs in Queensland's deliberations on the federal question of a political union with the other five Australian colonies. Similar features marked the discussions in the other colonies. Deakin reflected in September 1900 that:

The Fortunes of Federalism have visibly trembled in the balance twenty times during the past ten years and have from the first moment to the last been subject to endless unforeseen and unpreventable interruptions, every one of which might have definitely postponed its triumph. Again and again it was made the sport of ministries and Parliaments and local agitations and just as often, indeed at every step, it benefited by their necessities and purely selfish actions.<sup>116</sup>

The discussion that follows seeks to restore a sense of the complexity and uncertainty that surrounded the issue of federation within one of the Australian colonies. It is a departure from the collective all colonies under examination account of the inevitable federation, towards a more detailed examination of a predominantly political issue within the framework of an independent sociopolitical unit drawing out its particular characteristics.

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<sup>116</sup> Deakin, *The Federal Story*: 9.



# Chapter 1

## ‘Mistress in Her Own Home’<sup>1</sup> - 1859 – 1880

### QUEENSLAND AN INDEPENDENT COLONY

*To the Editor of the Moreton Bay Courier*

Sir, - The barque of State is at last afloat and proclaimed by Imperial authority to be ready to navigate the dangerous seas of Politics, full of sunken rocks not apparent to a casual observer, and shoals as deceptive as they are dangerous.<sup>2</sup>

The most contested issue throughout the protracted and often bitter 1850s campaign for the territorial separation of the Moreton Bay District from the colony of New South Wales was the capacity of the District to manage its own political and economic affairs. In the Imperial arena, Thomas Elliot, the Colonial Office's Assistant Under-Secretary, concluded in 1852 that 'there cannot be said to be the means at Moreton Bay of forming a good separate government.'<sup>3</sup> Herman Merivale, the Permanent Under-Secretary, concurred and recommended, that while separation was 'ultimately, not only desirable but inevitable', a 'simpler' form of government was needed in the northern district.<sup>4</sup> Merivale argued that a Crown colony, in which power was divided between a governor and a single legislature of elected and nominated members, was 'more suitable to the present circumstances of Moreton Bay'.<sup>5</sup> In 1859, under instruction from the new Secretary of State for the Colonies Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Merivale sought the advice of the British Crown Law Office on whether a crown colony government could be granted rather than responsible self-government. Merivale reiterated that the latter was 'unfitted

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<sup>1</sup> Raphael Cilento and Clem Lack, (eds.), *Triumph in the Tropics: An Historical Sketch of Queensland*. Brisbane: Smith & Paterson, 1959: 159.

<sup>2</sup> 'XYZ', Letter to the Editor, *Moreton Bay Courier*, 30 July 1859.

<sup>3</sup> B.A. Knox, 'Moreton Bay Separation: A Problem of Imperial Government, 1825-1856,' *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 14: 56 (1971): 561-78.

<sup>4</sup> Herman Merivale, Colonial Office Minute, 25 November 1852 on Governor Fitzroy to Lord Grey Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 June 1852 cited in *Ibid*, 569.

<sup>5</sup> G.P. Shaw, 'The 'Tangled Web' of Separation,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 29: 2 (1983): 245-61.

for the early condition of a Colony like Moreton Bay.<sup>6</sup> The political inexperience of the colonists in the Northern District of New South Wales, in conjunction with Moreton Bay's small population and 'scanty' revenue was the basis of the Colonial Office's endorsement of a Crown colony form of government.<sup>7</sup> In the colonial arena, the debate over the District's separatist objective was a more lively and bitter rhetorical duel over competence and motives.

Sydney, as the centre of governance for New South Wales, initially expressed its assessment of the Northern District's 'utter unfitness' to govern its own affairs through 'portions of laughter, pity, and contempt'.<sup>8</sup> Criticism of the 'misguided' northerner's demand for separation became more derisive when it was accompanied by the 'desperate extremity of asking for convicts'.<sup>9</sup> New South Wales was at the time fervently protesting to the Imperial government over its plans to resume convict transportation. The inclusion therefore in the northerner's petition for separation of a declared willingness to accept convict labour provoked Sydney's immediate censure of northern separation as a repugnant 'false step'.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, it indicated the degree of frustration felt in the north by the District's chronic shortage of labour and by the 'middle district's' wholesale retention of assisted immigrants.<sup>11</sup> This was 'enough', the *Sydney Morning Herald* uncharacteristically acknowledged, 'to rouse very angry feelings, and to provoke

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<sup>6</sup> B.A. Knox, 'Care is more important than haste': Imperial Policy and the Creation of Queensland, 1856-9,' *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 17: 66 (1976): 64-83.

<sup>7</sup> The charge of a lack of experienced Members of Parliament was accurate. The first Parliament contained only three Members who had served in a colonial legislature and none of these had long experience. Morrison accurately notes that the 'Assembly was a band of enthusiastic amateurs.' Lord Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor Fitzroy', 27 December 1851 cited in *Queensland 1900: A Narrative of Her Past Together With Biographies of Her Leading Men*. Brisbane: Alcazar Press, 1900: 63; A. A. Morrison, 'Colonial Society 1860-1890,' *Queensland Heritage*, 1: 5 (November 1966): 21-30.

<sup>8</sup> William Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland; From 1770 to the Close of the Year 1881. Volume 1*. Brisbane: William Thorne, 1882: 174.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 1850 cited in W. Ross Johnston, *A Documentary History of Queensland*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988: 64.



the adoption of very rash expedients.’<sup>12</sup> By the mid-1850s calls for separation with ‘exiles’ had waned and from then until 1859 the basis of the appeal was solely for independence. Southern opponents of the measure critiqued the district’s revenue raising ability and managerial skills. New South Wales’ Solicitor-General, J.B. Darvall argued that:

To my mind never was so weak, so mischievous, so insane a measure as this proposed separation....look at the expense that must be incurred for the necessary Government staff that will be required. At least £100,000 a year will be required to cover this....And all this at a time when the revenue of Moreton Bay is hardly sufficient to support a corporal’s guard in a watch-house.<sup>13</sup>

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reproached the ‘lazy folks of Brisbane’ for their failure to utilise their own material resources and more particularly their inability to work together:

They have never been able to establish a steam communication with Sydney, but, as much as they desire to be independent of the ‘middle district,’ are forced to rely upon a Sydney company to furnish them with steamboats, and upon Sydney merchants to undertake their whole external commerce....Their great staple of wool is endangered by the presence of a dangerous epidemic amongst their sheep, and yet they cannot agree among themselves as to what measures should be taken to check the evil and provide against its recurrence. A stock insurance company – the obvious remedy – was talked of, and went so far as to be organised, but like every similar movement of the kind in the north, it never survived the issue of the prospectus.<sup>14</sup>

Evidence of Sydney’s mismanagement was the counter to these charges. Separatists protested, through the press and numerous petitions to the Colonial Office, that southern interests located in a distant government had impeded the progress of Moreton Bay by withholding immigrants, despite the north’s contribution to the immigration fund through local land sales and by the unjust

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<sup>10</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 1850.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> In 1848 for example New South Wales received 7000 assisted immigrants and of these only 130 reached Moreton Bay. Ross Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland: From Dreaming to 1915*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982: 105; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 1850.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in *Queensland 1900*: 66-67.

allocation of colonial revenue.<sup>15</sup> Merivale acknowledged that their case had substance:

The greatness of a colony, importance of its amount of population and revenue, etc., are poor compensations to men for being governed by a knot of townfolk living 600 or 700 miles off: and this the Sydney [Legislative] Council practically is. The very Executive Council, though they give very temperate and reasonable answers to certain statements of the Memorialists, yet speak of them evidently rather as inhabitants of a distant dependency than as integrally one with themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Northerners were resolute that for the district to prosper self-government was essential. Intimations that the Colonial Office contemplated conferring a Crown-colony government were met with vocal animosity. The *Moreton Bay Courier* warned that 'Separation should be resisted almost to the death on such terms.'<sup>17</sup> Delay by the Imperial authorities ultimately guaranteed self-government for the Northern district.<sup>18</sup>

A provision of the 1855 Imperial Act, *New South Wales Constitution Statute*, bound the Colonial Office to grant to the new colony a legislature 'in manner as nearly resembling the form of government...established in New South Wales.'<sup>19</sup> This Act had conferred responsible government to New South Wales and accordingly the new colony 'Queen's land' was to commence its career with a bicameral legislature, consisting of a nominated Legislative Council and an elected Legislative Assembly.<sup>20</sup> News of this decision arrived in Brisbane on the 10<sup>th</sup> July

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<sup>14</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* cited in Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*: 174-175.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*: 135; Shaw, 'The 'Tangled Web' of Separation': 245.

<sup>16</sup> Colonial Office Minutes, 24, 29, 30 December 1853 on Governor Fitzroy to Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 6 September 1853 CO/201/466 cited in Knox, 'Moreton Bay Separation': 571-72.

<sup>17</sup> *Moreton Bay Courier*, 27 July 1856 cited in Shaw, 'The 'Tangled Web' of Separation': 255.

<sup>18</sup> In July 1856 the Imperial authorities had consented to the Moreton Bay District's petition for separation. The final decision on the form of government to be granted was delayed for a further three years principally as a result of the frequent changes in the Colonial Office's leadership. Between 1854 and 1859 there were eight Secretary of States for the Colonies. Shaw, 'The 'Tangled Web' of Separation': 250.

<sup>19</sup> Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 44,72.

<sup>20</sup> Shaw, 'The 'Tangled Web' of Separation': 254-55; Knox, 'Care is more important than haste': 77-78.

1859 and 'never was there such rejoicing'.<sup>21</sup> The new colony, the contemporary historian J.J. Knight declared, had been 'liberated from the galling position of being a mere dependency of a dependency'.<sup>22</sup> Though the Northern District had been promoted to the status of a self-governing colony the nature of the settlement remained rudimentary. Queensland's first Governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen therefore found the colony in December 1859:

small in numbers, poor in circumstances and its inhabitants only unanimous in their strong desire to have a Government and Governor of their own and to manage their own affairs in their own way, coupled moreover with a high notion of their capabilities as legislators, all the stronger because unaccompanied by any practical knowledge of legislative duties.<sup>23</sup>

Yet in the face of these political, economic and geographical realities, there was unbounded optimism. The *Moreton Bay Courier* declared that 'the great event of our history stands recorded. A new epoch in the annals of Australia has come to pass; 'our era' has commenced'.<sup>24</sup> This chapter will survey the principal traits of Queensland's development in the first twenty years of self-government. The formative stages of Queensland's economic, social and political development are crucial to the construction of a more workable understanding of Queensland's participation in the federation movement. The broad rationale for this examination of Queensland's early history is drawn from the historian Brian de Garis' observations that to present a judicious account of the federation movement it is essential 'to understand what sort of communities the colonies had been, were

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<sup>21</sup> J.J. Knight, *In the Early Days: History and Incident of Pioneer Queensland*. Brisbane: Sapsford & Co, 1898: 351.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> The population of Queensland at separation was 25,000 and though the treasury purportedly contained only 7½d, the estimated revenue for the first financial year was £180,000. This, Bowen informed Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, positioned Queensland twelfth amongst the forty-eight British colonies. Bowen to Lytton, 6 March 1860, Stanley Lane-Poole, (ed.), *Thirty Years of Colonial Government: A Selection from the Despatches and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir George Ferguson Bowen, G.C.M.G. Volume 1*. London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1889: 106-12; *Guardian*, 31 October 1865 cited in Patricia Kelly, 'Sir George Bowen, Governor of Queensland, 1859-1868', Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1952: 18-19.

<sup>24</sup> *Moreton Bay Courier* cited in Lane-Poole, (ed.), *Thirty Years of Colonial Government*: 85.

and were becoming.<sup>25</sup> More specifically, it is evident that the foundation of certain enduring and distinctive Queensland policies and qualities were established in this first phase of its independence. An overarching determinant and the wellspring of this new colony's strident enthusiasm was an awareness that within their geographical boundaries existed a 'potentiality of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice'.<sup>26</sup> The desire of Queensland's colonists to harvest these riches resulted in the idea of 'progress' through 'development' being particularly pronounced in this 'favoured infant nation'.<sup>27</sup> The creation and application of practical legislation to tap the various resources of the colony became the axis around which Queensland politics immediately and persistently rotated. Land, railway and labour policies summarily emerge as the fundamental underpinning of the new colony's political and populist platform for development. An imperative in Queensland's developmental directive was rapid 'progress' to redress the colony's delayed start and to propel it towards 'a leading position among the other colonies'.<sup>28</sup> Within these parameters, rapid economic development of the colony's vast resources consistently superseded moral considerations; in Lewis' words, these 'conditions did not usually favour other worldly justifications of everyday actions...colonists felt a more or less sacred duty to develop their new environment'.<sup>29</sup> Set in this formative phase of Queensland's development was an enduring fixation on internal progress, which would consistently prove to be a serious impediment to the advancement of the broader ideal of political federation. Moreover, it would

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<sup>25</sup> Garis, 'Some Reflections on the Problems Involved in Writing a History of the Australian Federation Movement,' 29-35.

<sup>26</sup> Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*: vii.

<sup>27</sup> 'Queensland', *Moreton Bay Courier*, 5 November 1859.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Mackenzie, 'Immigration Committee's Report', 26 July 1864, Queensland Parliamentary Debates, [QPD] 1(1864): 196.

<sup>29</sup> Glen Lewis, 'Australian Nationalism and the Queensland Tariff Debate,' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 62: 3 (December 1976): 168-78.

produce policies that were particular to Queensland and at odds with the social and political principles of the other Australian colonies.

Queensland's principal asset at separation was the '140,000,000 acres' of land within its borders.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, land policy and economic policies contingent on land policy dominated the colony's early politics. The pattern of land development that emerged in the new colony during the 1860s and 1870s had had its foundations securely laid in the rapid expansion of pastoral settlement during the 1840s and 1850s. The pre-separation incursions of squatters into the colony's vast expanse of territory had pushed the frontier westward well into the Maranoa district and north into the lower Leichhardt district of central Queensland.<sup>31</sup> The pace and the extent at which this occupation occurred bestowed on the new colony of Queensland two dynamic traits: the paramount importance of the pastoral industry and a decentralised pattern of settlement.

In 1859, it was evident that Queensland's future prosperity was dependent on the pastoral industry. Statistically, 70 per cent of the revenue and 94 per cent of exports were derived from pastoralism: it was the new colony's only productive industry.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, its rapid expansion had continued unabated with Governor Bowen reporting in 1860 that:

Fresh bands of pastoral settlers, driving their thousands of cattle, sheep, and horses before them, are fast pushing out into the wilderness; and it is confidently expected that, in the course of the next five years, there will be a chain of stations from Moreton Bay to the Gulf of Carpentaria...<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Moreton Bay Courier*, 5 November 1859.

<sup>31</sup> B. R. Kingston, 'Theory and Practice in the Pastoral Settlement of Queensland. 1859-1869', Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1963: 1.

<sup>32</sup> Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland From Dreaming to 1915*: 133.

<sup>33</sup> Lane-Poole, (ed.), *Thirty Years of Colonial Government*: 109.

The economic success of the pastoral industry culminated in the idea of progress being inseparably attached to this 'moving frontier'. The occupation of vast tracts of Aboriginal land invariably resulted in violent confrontations between Europeans and Aborigines. The whole squatting frontier became, in the words of the early Queensland historian William Coote, 'a line of perpetual conflict, in which it is to be feared no small cruelty was exercised....There is selfishness in civilisation'.<sup>34</sup> Sociological theories formulated in the mid-nineteenth century by Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin had presented the 'perfect rationalisation' for this violent contest over the colony's principal resource.<sup>35</sup>

The theoretical maxims of 'natural selection' or 'survival of the fittest' encouraged Europeans to 'dichotomise humanity' into 'superior' and 'inferior' or 'civilised' and 'savage'.<sup>36</sup> Deployed practically, these race theorems provided a legitimate rationale for the violent process of colonisation that occurred in Australia and resulted in the forceful dispossession of the Indigenous population from their land. Within Queensland, the strength of the colonists' demand for the rapid and absolute control of its land resources was such that it fostered the most brutal application of race theory.

Boyd Morehead, a prominent Queensland conservative and later premier, presented the underlying rationale of 'what was being done in Queensland' to the colony's Aboriginal population:

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<sup>34</sup> Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*: 93.

<sup>35</sup> Raymond Evans, 'Keep White The Strain' Race Relations in a Colonial Setting', Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders, and Kathryn Cronin, (eds.), *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland. A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination*. 3rd Edition. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993: 1-23.

<sup>36</sup> Pierre L. van den Berghe cited in Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations 1788 - 1993*. St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1994: 17.

The colonists had come here as white men and were going to put the black man out...The lower race must give way before the superior race...[It was a mistake] to try and initiate a course of action by which these poor creatures would be enabled to linger out an existence which was bound to cease on the advance of the Anglo-Saxon...The blackfellows had to go, and go they must.<sup>37</sup>

The initial nature of the violence was sporadic. Aboriginal resistance to white occupation was aggressively countered by colonists in defence of their presumed innate and superior right to 'occupy the country'.<sup>38</sup> This state of affairs however quickly evolved into a more institutionalised 'policy tending to extermination'.<sup>39</sup> The vanguard of this policy was the 'decimating activities' of the Government-sanctioned Native Mounted Police Force.<sup>40</sup> Operating in small detachments of two white officers and five to ten Aboriginal troopers, this force ruthlessly carried out its instructions to 'disperse any large assemblage of blacks', and to dispense 'retributive justice'.<sup>41</sup> These 'barbarous corps of exterminators' in collaboration with the settlers' overt acts of violence by the gun, poison and savage dogs instituted in Queensland a 'system of native slaughter...merciless and complete'.<sup>42</sup> The government and the public in general remained 'obstinately deaf' to the various 'philanthropic' voices who opposed the 'cruelties practised on our blacks'.<sup>43</sup> In the new colony of Queensland the vital link between economic prosperity, pastoralism

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<sup>37</sup> Boyd Morehead, *QPD*, 32 (1880): 1141, 1145 cited in *Ibid*: 37

<sup>38</sup> The Darling Downs pastoralist Robert Ramsey notably conceded in 1869 that the violent frontier confrontation was a 'most difficult and most serious question' for to his mind the Indigenous population had 'the same right to defend their country' and had done so with 'courage and devotion'. Despite acknowledging the problematic features of the violence engendered by the white incursion Ramsey fell back to conventional theory of a racial hierarchy to rationalise the state affairs and therefore he concluded 'that the inferior must give way to the superior race.' Robert Ramsey cited in Maurice French, *Conflict on the Condamine: Aborigines and the European Invasion*. Toowoomba: Darling Downs Institute Press, 1989: 120.

<sup>39</sup> Raymond Evans, 'A Policy Tending to Extermination': The Queensland Native Mounted Police' Evans, Saunders, and Cronin, (eds.), *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*: 55-66.

<sup>40</sup> Raymond Evans, 'Musketry and Terror': The Pattern of European Conquest', Evans, Saunders, and Cronin, (eds.), *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*: 47-54; Clive Moore, 'Restraining Their Savage Propensities' The South Kennedy and North Leichhardt Districts in the 1860s and 1870s,' Henry Reynolds, (ed.), *Race Relations in North Queensland*. Townsville: James Cook University, 1993: 83-114.

<sup>41</sup> Markus, *Australian Race Relations 1788 – 1993*: 39-40.

<sup>42</sup> *Queenslander*, 13 May 1874; 'Black and White in Queensland,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 January 1874 cited in Evans, 'A Policy Tending to Extermination': 62-63.

<sup>43</sup> 'White and Black', *Queenslander*, 19 June 1880, *Queenslander*, 8 May 1880 cited in Evans, 'A Policy Tending to Extermination': 64.

and the continual expansion of the frontier immediately and persistently took precedence over moral questions of the right or wrong of the frontier society's methods of 'internal protection.'<sup>44</sup> Thus for the pastoralist, Charles Eden, the establishment of the force was a 'question of absolute necessity, a choice between the protection of the pastoral industry of the country or the abandonment of that pursuit by the colonists.'<sup>45</sup> In 1868, William Walsh, the Member for Maryborough, articulated in parliament an awareness that the Aboriginal issue was 'an important question – one on which the honour of the country rested....for God's sake remove this [Native Police] force that is such a stain upon us'.<sup>46</sup> Internal or external concern over the manner in which policies were implemented in Queensland was at this time of little consequence. Queensland had been granted 'the full blow of responsible government' and this entitled the colony to be the 'administrators of their own affairs' and more importantly, impervious to any external interference in their internal affairs.<sup>47</sup> Walsh's estimation that the colony's Indigenous policy would cast an indelible stain on Queensland would in due course prove accurate. In 1883 the ill-repute engendered by Queensland's treatment of its Aboriginal population would constitute the principal argument of the humanitarian and Imperial case against Queensland's attempt to annex New Guinea. This dynamic event would exert a paradoxical influence on the movement for political federation.

In the formative phase of Queensland's self-government there immediately arose the familiar Australian dispute over what form of land usage was most desirable in a developing society. The extent of pastoral occupation prior to separation

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<sup>44</sup> Bowen to Lord Carnarvon, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12 November 1866 cited in J.C.H. Gill, 'Governor Bowen and the Aborigines: A Documentary Review,' *Queensland Heritage*, 2: 8 (May 1973): 3-29.

<sup>45</sup> Charles Eden, *My Wife and I in Queensland*. London, 1872 cited in Henry Reynolds, *With the White People*. Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1990: 66.



elevated pastoralism as the most obvious means to establish and maintain an economic base. Claiming 'an equal liberality' was the colony's burgeoning urban/agricultural sector.<sup>48</sup> Agriculture, it was contended, was a higher form of land use than pastoralism for it offered a permanent improvement of the land, diversification of the economy and the encouragement of closer settlement.<sup>49</sup> The contentiousness of these two differing social visions on how the colony's lands should be utilised and the direction in which the economy should develop engendered an inordinate interest in Queensland's first Land Acts.

Bowen had been forewarned of this 'irritating contest between rival interests', and endeavoured to present 'a conciliatory and equitable settlement of the land question.'<sup>50</sup> Bowen's objective was partially achieved in the four Land Acts of 1860 that constituted the new Queensland Government's land policy.<sup>51</sup> A cautious compromise was presented through the designation of specific 'agricultural reserves' around each of the major ports and towns, where blocks between 40 and 320 acres could be selected. Diminishing the effect of this provision was the prohibitive set price of £1 per acre and hence few were able to benefit from this tentative step to encourage the diversification of the economy.<sup>52</sup> Squatting interests, meanwhile, were well satisfied with the provision of fourteen-year leases of areas up to 100 square miles (256 sq. km). Fourteen years was considered an

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<sup>46</sup> William Walsh, 'Re-organisation of the Native Police', 30 January 1868, *QPD*, 6 (1868): 934.

<sup>47</sup> 'Moreton Bay Separation', *Moreton Bay Courier*, 6 April 1859.

<sup>48</sup> *Weekly Herald*, 29 July 1865 cited in Johnston, *A Documentary History of Queensland*: 173.

<sup>49</sup> This argument was based on the early nineteenth century neo-classical ideology that there were four stages of civilisation – hunting, pastoralism, agriculture and commerce. Maurice French, *Pubs, Ploughs & 'Peculiar People': Towns, Farms and Social Life*. Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland, 1992: ii.

<sup>50</sup> Lane-Poole (ed.) *Thirty Years of Colonial Government*: 81; R. B. Joyce, 'George Ferguson Bowen and Robert George Wyndham Herbert: The Imported Openers,' Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce, and Margaret Cribb, (eds.), *The Premiers of Queensland*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990: 9-43.

<sup>51</sup> *Unoccupied Crown Lands Occupation Act of 1860, Occupied Crown Lands Leasing Act of 1860, Tenders for Crown Lands Act of 1860 and the Crown Lands Alienation Act, 1860*. Charles Arrowsmith Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*. Brisbane: A.J. Cumming, Govt. Printer, 1919: 308-10.

adequate timeframe because pastoralists believed that on the expiration of their leases, smaller settlers would have encroached upon their boundaries and this would require them to occupy new territory. Closer settlement in effect would result in a reclassification of the land as settled and this would cause the pastoral rents to rise. An additional but intrinsic factor that influenced the pastoralist's attitude was their assumption that there existed an unlimited area of free land still to be exploited. Queensland's first land policy did not, despite Bowen's laudation, 'settle that long quarrel between pastoral and agricultural interests which has raged in all new countries since the days of Abel', yet it did furnish a notable precedent.<sup>53</sup>

Both Bowen and Queensland's first premier, the 'imported opener' Robert Herbert, attempted to promptly resolve Queensland's land question, to avert a political clash between these two divergent interest groups.<sup>54</sup> Two interconnected factors barred this endeavour. First, the vital economic importance of the pastoral industry to Queensland and second the fact that the new parliament was dominated by squatters.<sup>55</sup> As a result of a 'curious mistake' the franchise arrangement for Queensland had not contained the 1858 amendment to New South Wales' Constitution that granted universal suffrage, instead it re-subjected the northerners to a propertied franchise that predated New South Wales' self-government.<sup>56</sup> The

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<sup>52</sup> B. R. Kingston, 'The Search for an Alternative to Free Selection,' *Queensland Heritage*, 1: 5 (November 1966): 3-9; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 309-10.

<sup>53</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 20.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Herbert had come to Queensland as Governor Bowen's private secretary and was chosen by Bowen to be Queensland's first colonial secretary because he was 'independent of local influences.' In Queensland's first elections Herbert was formally elected to the position he had occupied for six months. Joyce, 'George Ferguson Bowen and Robert George Wyndham Herbert: The Imported Openers': 24-25.

<sup>55</sup> The occupations of 24 of the first Parliament's 26 members was 12 Pastoralists, 6 Merchants/Businessmen, 5 Professionals and 1 Civil Servant. Lyn Armstrong, 'A Somewhat Rash Experiment': Queensland Parliament as a Microcosm of Society,' Barry Shaw, (ed.), *Brisbane Corridors of Power. Brisbane History Group Papers. No. 15*. Brisbane: Brisbane History Group, 1997: 53-59.

<sup>56</sup> Qualification of electors was, twenty-one years of age; natural born or naturalised subject to three years residence in the colony and six months in a district, or six months' possession of a freehold or leasehold estate of the clear value of £100 or annual value of £10. Plural voting was also permitted. The Colonial Office Minute on the franchise 'mistake' outlined that the problem was of 'small importance, as the new Legislature

proclamation of 20<sup>th</sup> December 1859 by Sir William Denison, the Governor-General in and over the colonies of New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, further compounded the situation.<sup>57</sup> Under this proclamation, sixteen electorates were established to return twenty-six members to the Queensland's new Legislative Assembly.<sup>58</sup> The pattern of unequal distribution, Coote argued, had 'purposely' granted the pastoral interest an overwhelming preponderance in the legislature.<sup>59</sup> William Traill's 1886 account of the resultant state of affairs illustrates the discord evoked:

Sir William Denison...managed...to leave to the new colony a legacy of internal feud, which for many subsequent years distracted the politics of the country and introduced discordant elements of party warfare, to the prejudice of useful and practical legislation.<sup>60</sup>

Not surprisingly within this context, the new Government's land policies principally accommodated the pastoral interest and this further fortified the political and economic primacy of pastoralism.<sup>61</sup> Political power essentially remained in the hands of pastoralists until the mid-1870s and this fostered a 'squatting stampede', in which the number of sheep and the area taken up trebled in the 1860s.<sup>62</sup>

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had the power to establish what franchise they pleased.' This failed to acknowledge the fact that the pastoral interests dominated the Legislature and were determined to continue to do so. Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 284; Colonial Office Minute, 30 March 1860 on Sir George Bowen to Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Queensland Despatch No.9, 31 December 1859, CO234/1 Queensland Original Correspondence, Australian Joint Copying Project [AJCP]; Shaw, 'The 'Tangled Web' of Separation': 259.

<sup>57</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 7.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> The twenty-six members were distributed thus three electorates were to return three members each, four to return two each and nine to return one member each. Pastoral areas were accorded a higher weight of representation than the urban constituencies. Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*: 226-227; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 7, 283.

<sup>60</sup> William Traill, *Historical Sketch of Queensland. Facsimile Edition*. Sydney: Lansdowne Press, 1974: 52.

<sup>61</sup> Charles Bernays, Queensland's political biographer notes that under this franchise arrangement there were 4,790 eligible voters and of these approximately 2500 voted and returned 26 members in Queensland's first election in 1860. Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 285.

<sup>62</sup> A significant contribution to this expansion was the arrival of a new wave of capital-rich and experienced southern squatters. Queensland's pastoral emphasis was enticing to many squatters who were beginning to feel the impact of the democratic policies that had been introduced in New South Wales and Victoria, which had been designed to breakdown the squatters' stranglehold on the land. In particular the Robertson Land Acts introduced in New South Wales by John Robertson in the early 1860s were referred to as the 'great land reforms' that lead to the dissolution of the old conservative pastoral political order. George Rankin cited in Bill Thorpe, *Colonial Queensland: Perspectives on a Frontier Society*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996: 116; Charles Schindler, 'The Evolution of Political Parties,' *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of*

Alternatively, the agricultural sector had attained an implicit recognition in the *Crown Lands Alienation Act* of the principle that farmers were a more desirable type of settler than pastoralists. This however was effectively neutralised by the government's insistence of an advance payment of £1 per acre.<sup>63</sup> The agricultural reserves were as a result disparagingly described as the 'anti-colonisation, or resident population obstruction scheme'.<sup>64</sup> The pastoral industry's economic dominance was therefore a decisive force in Queensland's initial phase of government-directed development. Devoid of alternative means to generate revenue, Queensland was compelled to adopt an economically expedient approach rather than one based on principle. The propensity towards this approach became a persistent and overarching feature of Queensland's politics.

Government measures, conducive solely to material advantage, were a direct response to the colonists' want for rapid progress through aggressive internal development. Such policies were generally unmindful of principles, moral factors or the long-term effects. In this economically reliant context the *Courier*, amidst its 1861 anti-squatter campaign, was forced to acknowledge that the pastoralists' demands needed to be heeded if Queensland was to continue to develop:

Wool, tallow, and hides are the great staple products of our colony. Upon the successful working of the princely properties on which this produce is raised depends, under present circumstances, the growth and stability of the wealth of the country. The demagogue and the agitator may cry continually "down with the squattocracy" and denominate it a vast system of

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*Queensland*, 1: 1-6 (1914-1919): 130-39; T. H. Irving, '1850-1870,' F. K. Crowley, (ed.), *A New History of Australia*. Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1976: 124-64; Anne Allingham, 'Pioneer Squatting in the Kennedy District,' *Lectures on North Queensland History. Second Series*. Townsville: History Department James Cook University of North Queensland, 1975: 77-96.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Herbert had indicted his advocacy for agriculture in his memorandum on lands, which explained the principles of the land code and gave priority to agriculture because it was of such 'deep interest, not only to those engaged in pastoral pursuits, but to all classes of the community.' Further, he believed that the colony had 'the richest soil and finest climate in the world.' Joyce, 'George Ferguson Bowen and Robert George Wyndham Herbert: The Imported Openers': 24-25; G.P. Taylor, 'Political Attitudes and Land Policy in Queensland, 1868-1894,' *Pacific Historical Review*, 37: 3 (August 1968): 247-64.

<sup>64</sup> Kingston, 'The Search for an Alternative to Free Selection': 3.

monopoly, but their cry must be feeble, and their private opinion lost in the great fact that it is the great source of both the supply and demand of the country.<sup>65</sup>

A corollary of the colonist's demand for aggressive development was the desire for an interventionist government. Australians, as Keith Hancock asserted, 'came to view the state as a vast public utility, which would be solicitous of their welfare in the dispensing of its blessings'.<sup>66</sup> Queenslanders were not merely expectant of the Government's benevolence but positively demanded its beneficence to furnish them with further privileges and progress through government legislature and expenditure.<sup>67</sup> The seed of this mentality can be located in the pre-separation Sydney-based management of the Moreton Bay District.

Sydney's perception of the Moreton Bay District, after the 1842 granting of free settlement, was that it was destined to be merely 'a profitable appanage to the parent colony, a mere outpost of not a very refined civilisation'.<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, little interest or capital was devoted to the development of infrastructure. In spite of this, the *Moreton Bay Courier* detailed in its inaugural publication in June 1846 the extent of the community's progress: '[c]hurches, schools, stores, shops, inns, dwelling houses, and erections for various purposes, have rapidly risen; settlements have become villages, villages towns'.<sup>69</sup> Contrary to this apparent growth the newspaper argued '[w]e have the mortification of seeing...revenue squandered by a herd of overpaid official drones, in a manner that too plainly

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<sup>65</sup> In May 1861 the *Moreton Bay Courier* became the *Courier* and in 1864 the titled changed again to the *Brisbane Courier*. *Courier*, 31 December 1861 cited in Kingston, 'Theory and Practice in the Pastoral Settlement of Queensland. 1859-1869': 101.

<sup>66</sup> Keith Hancock cited in Chandran Kukathas, 'Liberalism The International Context,' J.R. Nethercote, (ed.), *Liberalism and the Australian Federation*. Sydney: The Federation Press, 2001: 13-27.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*: 35; A. A. Morrison, 'Colonial Society 1860-1890': 25-6.

<sup>68</sup> Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*: 29.

<sup>69</sup> *Moreton Bay Courier* cited in *Queensland 1900*: 36.

bespeaks them ignorant of our wants and careless of our welfare.'<sup>70</sup> While in effect the Sydney-based government had been a little more attentive to the settlement after 1842, the depreciating description of the Northern District 'as a miserable hole' was generally maintained.<sup>71</sup> Queensland's internal communication infrastructure suffered particularly under the weight of Sydney's 'tyranny, misrepresentation and neglect'.<sup>72</sup> At the time of separation, the new colony had no telegraph line, rudimentary port facilities, no railways and a system of roads that were little more than a series of tracks.<sup>73</sup> Self-government had provided the new colony with the means to amend this state of affairs. Bowen declared:

All contribute to the revenue; all should benefit by its application....to bring home to all an equitable share of the advantages which the rapid development of your almost inexhaustible resources, due to your own skill and industry, will each year enable the Government to extend.<sup>74</sup>

Not surprisingly 'young Queensland' went in 'for public works on a magnificent scale.'<sup>75</sup>

With no system of local government, the new Parliament held the public purse strings for all developmental projects, a situation which instituted a 'roads and bridges' political mentality. Members of Parliament were therefore the servants of their constituents and their needs were chiefly expressed in terms of state expenditure. Alert to the necessity of public works, Bowen was also conscious of the need to 'check extravagance arising out of the constant "log-rolling" of a

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*: 37.

<sup>71</sup> Exacerbating the state of affairs was the termination of public works expenditure by the Sydney based government under the pretext that separation was inevitable and imminent; *Moreton Bay Courier*, 6 January 1858 cited in Shaw, 'The 'Tangled Web' of Separation': 1.

<sup>72</sup> *Moreton Bay Courier* cited in *Queensland 1900*: 36.

<sup>73</sup> Queensland Government, *Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress*. Brisbane: Anthony J. Cummings, Government Printer, 1909: 17.

<sup>74</sup> 1860 Reply to the Address of Warwick cited in Lane-Poole (ed.) *Thirty Years of Colonial Government*: 125.

<sup>75</sup> Schindler, 'The Evolution of Political Parties': 135.

Colonial Parliament.<sup>76</sup> Curtailment proved difficult against the weight of rivalry between the colony's various centres of population to procure the government's beneficent gift. 'The contemptible history of local squabbles' in Queensland was a direct and potent derivative of the process by which the colony was settled.<sup>77</sup>

A characteristic feature of Queensland was its decentralised pattern of settlement, one that deviated markedly from the centralist tendencies of the other Australian colonies. This process was initiated by the official isolation of the Moreton Bay penal establishment, which strictly prohibited approach within fifty miles (80.5km) of the settlement until 1842. As southern pastoralists drove their sheep northwards into the 'almost unknown interior' of the Darling Downs district, the ban on access to Brisbane's port facilities dictated the need for an alternative service centre and trade route.<sup>78</sup> As a result Ipswich developed as an important inland centre for the squatters, in conjunction with the port at Cleveland. In 1842, when free settlement permitted access to Brisbane, Queensland's first squatters held little or no allegiance to the town. What developed was an 'altogether antagonistic' rivalry between Ipswich and Brisbane, as each centre laid bare their claim to be the colony's new capital.<sup>79</sup>

The process of northern settlement further retarded Brisbane's ascendance. Concurrent with the early pastoral occupation of land in the west was a northward expansion, and by the early 1840s this northern frontier had reached the Burnett and Mary rivers. After a failed attempt in 1842, a port was re-established in 1847

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<sup>76</sup> Bowen to Honourable R. Lowe, no date, cited in Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 36.

<sup>77</sup> 'Moreton Bay Separation', *Moreton Bay Courier*, 6 April 1859.

<sup>78</sup> Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*: 32.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*: 195.

at the mouth of the Mary River from which vessels traded with Sydney. By 1850, Rockhampton had set up a port to service, direct with Sydney, the supply and export needs of the pastoralists in the area. The pastoral origins of these two ports highlight a significant feature of Queensland's settlement: that it was regional economic interests rather than government policy that initiated the development of ports. In line with this fact the northward wave of pastoral expansion in the early 1860s resulted in ten ports being established by 1865.<sup>80</sup> At this early stage of Queensland's economic growth Brisbane's late start as a commercial base impacted on its growth and its future relations with these outposts.

In contrast, Sydney and Melbourne were well-established, important mercantile and financial centres. The direct access they provided to colonial and overseas wool markets, and the squatters' preference in particular for Sydney suppliers over the Brisbane's nascent mercantile sector, resulted in Brisbane initially being circumvented.<sup>81</sup> Direct communications with Sydney gave rise to the extraordinary situation that for northerners, for example from Rockhampton, to travel to Brisbane required a sea trip first to Sydney and then back to Brisbane.<sup>82</sup> The remote south-eastern location of Brisbane in an era of limited internal communications between the scattered pastoral communities, forestalled Brisbane's development as the colony's economic centre, a feature divergent from the other Australian capitals. By 1859 Brisbane had 'inched ahead of its rivals' and did contain the important

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<sup>80</sup> Glen Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland: A Study in Economic Nationalism*. St Lucia: Queensland University Press, 1973: 7-21.

<sup>81</sup> A jovial description of Brisbane's infant mercantile and commerce sector was that there were more shopkeepers than customers; Morrison, 'Colonial Society 1860-1890': 23.

<sup>82</sup> A. A. Morrison, 'Politics in Early Queensland,' *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 4: 3 (December 1950): 293-312.



official and commercial buildings requisite for a capital.<sup>83</sup> The most notable consequence of Queensland's scattered pattern of settlement was the firm establishment of local or regional affiliations. In a colonial legislature preoccupied with the pragmatic demands of the frontier, these local loyalties were a significant and disruptive element. As Glen Lewis accurately noted, the 'importance of regionalism in colonial politics at the time seems difficult to exaggerate.'<sup>84</sup>

Traditionally these formative years of Queensland politics are presented as a perpetual contest solely between the rival interests of squatters and urban/agrarians based essentially on their contrasting attitudes towards land utilisation and settlement. The complexity of the period is more accurately described as a 'kaleidoscope pattern of divisions', in which alliances were altered and amalgamated by circumstances influenced by an overriding developmental notion and regionalism.<sup>85</sup> To speculate on the contribution that the professed inexperience of Queensland's parliamentarians had on this constantly shifting basis of political support is a fraught task. There is concrete evidence that the first parliament did lack experience. The *Courier* remarked in 1862 that it was 'composed of the most heterogeneous of materials; all sorts of men have found themselves thrust into a position of eminence which they could not have hoped to have attained twelve months before.'<sup>86</sup> The Assembly's first Speaker Gilbert Elliott, acknowledged that he was unfamiliar with parliamentary 'business...but as none of the members know anything about it, they will not be a bit wiser should I make a

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<sup>83</sup> Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland*: 9; J.X. Jobson, 'Aspects of Brisbane Society in the Eighteen Sixties', Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1959: 8.

<sup>84</sup> Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland*: 7.

<sup>85</sup> John Fowler, 'Queensland 1860-1888: Political, Social and Religious Comments', Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1962: 3.

<sup>86</sup> *Courier*, 7 August 1862 cited in Ross K. Rolfe, 'The First Parliament of Queensland, 1860-1863', Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1977: 38.

mistake.<sup>87</sup> It was, as A.A. Morrison succinctly acknowledged, 'a band of enthusiastic amateurs.'<sup>88</sup> More particularly, as the *Courier* had noted, it was made up of dissimilar elements that held a divergent range of ideals based on what William Coote critically called, an 'undercurrent excited by self-interest and selfish fear' over the future direction of Queensland's development.<sup>89</sup> These differing ideals were not explicitly embodied into two opposing camps but rather they had a vague and amorphous existence to which clarity was often conferred by regionalism. Queensland it would seem produced a type of pragmatic yet independent politician attracted by the potential economic benefits of the colony's frontier conditions but guided by the more specific influence of their regional locality.

While pastoralists had dominated the early entrepreneurial phase of Queensland's development and had established and held a numerically commanding position within the parliament, there did also exist a burgeoning urban agrarian collective of merchants, shopkeepers and agriculturalists who identified themselves as Liberals. Yet beneath the apparent unity of these broad classifications of pastoralists and Liberals were disparate interest groups. Both were in essence a loosely woven unit of factions based on regionalism. The intersection of these regional factors with a political culture that saw the colonial government as a vast resource for public expenditure engendered a community-enforced independence within the parliament. 'Local' representatives avoided commitment to a parliamentary leader or ministry and forcefully advocated their regions' interests to

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<sup>87</sup> Interestingly Elliott was one of the three members who had had experience in the New South Wales legislature, yet he considered himself to be inexperienced. Gilbert Elliott to his son 1860 cited in Armstrong, 'A Somewhat Rash Experiment': 54.

<sup>88</sup> Morrison, 'Colonial Society 1860-1890': 21.

<sup>89</sup> Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*: 253.

obtain the required distribution of public money for the constituency's advancement.<sup>90</sup> A 'bewildering picture of changing combinations' was instituted under the premise that votes depended on action and actions depended upon votes.<sup>91</sup> Results therefore, were the priority as the Member for Clermont, Oscar de Satge declared:

the development of a great colony is something like that of "station improvements" which are constantly required and no new member of the legislature was held worth his salt by his constituents who did not try to get a dam made or well sunk on some waterless road, to say nothing of a jail, and a court-house for every opening township.<sup>92</sup>

Regional wrangles over this form of public expenditure paled in comparison to the disputes that surrounded larger development schemes. Railways, immigration and land settlement were the tripartite focus of Queensland's development and in the resulting fiscal contests over revenue expenditure the politics of territorial and economic gain were aggressively played out.

Transport, in the formulation of government policy, was a major priority and the most integral mode was railways. Whilst there was uniform agreement on the conviction that a railway network would substantially contribute to the prosperity of the colony, by encouraging inland settlement and improving access to markets, conflict routinely arose over the two core questions of finance and location. The limited availability of private capital in the colony presented the Government with little alternative but to accept full responsibility for rail construction.<sup>93</sup> In May 1863,

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<sup>90</sup> Rolfe, 'The First Parliament of Queensland', 38; Rhodes, 'The Australian Federation Referenda 1898-1900: A Spatial Analysis of Voting Behaviour': 158-59.

<sup>91</sup> Morrison, 'Colonial Society 1860-1890': 24.

<sup>92</sup> Oscar de Satge, Member for Clermont 4 March 1869-4 April 1870; Satge, *Pages From the Journal of a Queensland Squatter*. 225.

<sup>93</sup> In both New South Wales and Victoria the construction of rail lines was initially undertaken by private enterprise however it was quickly recognised that the magnitude of the task was beyond the scope of their funds and thus the Government's of each colony took over the construction. T.A. Coghlan, *A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia*. Sydney: Charles Potter Government Printer, 1894: 89.

a Railway Bill was introduced into Parliament which proposed that a loan of nearly £1,000,000 be raised in London for Queensland's first railway line from Ipswich 'into the interior' to service the Darling Downs.<sup>94</sup> The strength of opposition against the Bill was such that it resulted in the dissolution of Queensland's first parliament in May 1863. The ensuing election, fought on the railway issue, returned the Government with a workable majority, which passed the Railway Bill in its first session.<sup>95</sup> The primary basis of the conflict that surrounded the Bill was the general belief that committing the colony to such a huge debt was a reckless action and second it reeked of parochialism for it was apparent that the rail line would only benefit the southern squatting representatives. More directly, the discord was a consequence of the intra-regional rivalry between Brisbane and Ipswich and significantly, for later patterns of railway development, the inter-regional jealousy of the central district.

That Ipswich rather than Brisbane was chosen as the commencement site of the westward line left the capital isolated and seething. Additionally, it indicated the regional political influence of Ipswich's member and Secretary for Lands and Public Works, Arthur Macalister. Under Macalister's patronage, Ipswich was to maintain the same rate of growth as Brisbane until 1867 and this effectively preserved the pre-separation rivalry and antagonism between the two centres.<sup>96</sup> The first section of the westward line to Grandchester was opened in July 1865 and extended to Toowoomba by 1867. This rail line substantially bolstered Ipswich's standing through its engineered promotion as the colony's principal

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<sup>94</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 25; Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 264.

<sup>95</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 25, 28.

<sup>96</sup> Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland*: 53; Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 268-9.

outlet for the wool wealth of the western pastoralists. The *Brisbane Courier* critically reflected that:

We made the mistake at the outset of commencing our main line of railway at a distance from the principal port and principal centre of population; it starts from one second class provincial town and stops at another, and of course does not pay....The line has been constructed amidst gross blundering and grosser knavery.<sup>97</sup>

Legislative approval for the terminus at Ipswich had been achieved through the political strength of the Ipswich/Downs pastoral connection. This collective had strenuously maintained their opposition to Brisbane's ascendancy as the focal point of the south.<sup>98</sup> The rigidity of this stance was further detailed in the proposed plan for a southern rail line from Toowoomba to the New South Wales border to directly connect the Downs with New South Wales' railway network.<sup>99</sup> Proposals to extend the line to Brisbane consequently prompted staunch parliamentary resistance from this Ipswich/Downs block. The continued expenditure on rail developments for the Ipswich terminal was to the Hon. H.B Fitz, in June 1866, 'sufficient to convince me that they [the Government] never intend to bring the railway to the metropolis.'<sup>100</sup> The enmity of this intra-regional rivalry was such that it affected the broader development of the colony. The early historian, Matt Fox, argued that to this Ipswich/Downs 'bunch':

measures for the welfare of the country as a whole were of no importance. Administration might come and go, but for them there was only one bond of unity, one cause of opposition, one reason for support, the determination that Ipswich should continue to be the terminus of the southern railway.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 23 May 1868 cited in Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland*: 23.

<sup>98</sup> Traill, *Historical Sketch of Queensland*: 55.

<sup>99</sup> George Bond, 'The Genesis of the Queensland Railways: 'Great Oaks from Little Acorns Grow!'' *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 7: 3 (1964): 521-39.

<sup>100</sup> During this debate the Hon. E.I.C. Browne declared that 'railways were introduced in this colony by what might be termed decidedly an Ipswich Ministry.' H.B. Fitz and E.I.C. Browne, 'Railway Between Brisbane and Ipswich', 28 June 1866, *QPD*, 3 (1866): 428-429, 435.

<sup>101</sup> Matt Fox, *The History of Queensland: Its People and Industries. An Historical and Commercial Review an Epitome of Progress. Volume 2*. Brisbane: State Publishing Company, 1923: 82.

By 1872, as 'propitiatory gestures to [the] clamouring Brisbane people', three surveys had been undertaken to determine a railway route between Brisbane and Ipswich.<sup>102</sup> Construction of the extension finally commenced in January 1873 and by July 1876 an uninterrupted railway connection between the two towns had been achieved. If Ipswich was, to use Glen Lewis' phrase, 'Brisbane's regional Achilles' heel' then Brisbane occupied a similar position for Rockhampton.<sup>103</sup>

The provocation for the conflict between Rockhampton and Brisbane was not surprisingly the manner in which parliament had allocated funding for railways. This dispute was symptomatic of an established and dynamic set of variables derived from Queensland's regional pattern of settlement. As a port-based town Rockhampton, prior to separation, had 'no connection whatever in commerce or trade' with Brisbane; Sydney was its commercial partner.<sup>104</sup> In effect, the settlement of the central region of Queensland had come from Sydney and this factor was plainly reflected in Rockhampton's opposition to the Moreton Bay District's separatist agitation. An 1855 memorial to the Secretary of State for the Colonies 'distinctly and earnestly' expressed the region's reticence to be 'separated from New South Wales'.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, it argued that Rockhampton's 'interests would be materially injured by any forced political connection with Moreton Bay as a separate and independent colony.'<sup>106</sup> By 1859, this disaffection with Brisbane had taken on a new guise. Once separation appeared inevitable, Rockhampton campaigned against Brisbane being appointed the new colony's

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<sup>102</sup> Unidentified quote cited in Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 269.

<sup>103</sup> Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland*: 53

<sup>104</sup> Petition against Separation from Landholders and Residents in the District of Port Curtis, 10 September 1855 cited in V.R. de V. Voss, 'Separatist Movements in Central Queensland in the Nineteenth Century', Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Sydney, 1952: 17-18.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

capital and presented itself as the more logical site. The generalised feeling of discontent against Brisbane was intensified by the practical problems associated with the region's limited representation in the remote parliament. William Walsh outlined in 1865 the disproportion in representation:

While Ipswich and its environs return six members, Rockhampton returns but one, although there is scarcely any difference in the population of the two places....As long as this House admits such a disparity in the representation of the different districts, so long will the northern towns, and especially Rockhampton, be justified in asserting that they are unfairly dealt with....the north has been for a long time utterly and unfortunately neglected.<sup>107</sup>

Though 'literally overwhelmed' in the Parliament, the northern representatives had opposed the Ipswich to Grandchester railway line specifically on the grounds that it was unjust to raise a public loan on the security of the whole colony, for it would require the appropriation of revenue generated in their region to repay a debt from which the area received no benefit.<sup>108</sup> Compounding this was the comparatively insignificant expenditure on railways within the region in contrast to the amount allocated in the south. In 1864 £401,421 was spent from the loan fund, and of this the Northern regions received £29,904.<sup>109</sup> Collectively these factors gave rise to the first venting of separatist agitation by Rockhampton's pastoralists.

By the mid-1860s, Rockhampton had attained regional supremacy in the centre of the colony's east coast. To foster further inland settlement, a submission was tabled in the Brisbane-based parliament for the construction of a railway line west from Rockhampton. The 1867 Government response, was a 30 mile (48.3km) line

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<sup>107</sup> William Walsh, 'Claims of the Central and Northern Districts', 28 June 1865, *QPD*, 2 (1865): 275.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*: 276.

to Westwood derisively referred to as, 'two sticks of rust leading to a gum tree.'<sup>110</sup> Dissatisfied central representatives from the late 1860s 'placed all their weight' on securing an extension of the railway. This endeavour was forestalled by the political manoeuvres of the south. Brisbane's representatives would not support Rockhampton's extension to Peak Downs unless the line from Brisbane to Ipswich was simultaneously approved. To protest against southern contrivance and to overcome the central representative's numeric weakness within the parliament, an alternative course of action was instituted. Simmering separatist agitation from 1867 consequently 'reached fever pitch in Rockhampton' during 1871.<sup>111</sup>

In January 1871, the acting Governor, Sir Maurice O'Connell, forwarded a Separation Memorial to the Secretary of State for the Colonies Lord Kimberly for presentation to Queen Victoria. This memorial requested the territorial separation of the region north of the Dawes Range into a new colony to be called 'Albertland'. In an accompanying confidential despatch O'Connell expressed the opinion that:

there is evidently, as I gather from Mr. Palmer's [the Premier] answer a reluctance on his part to make this matter a cabinet question, and I can only therefore forward this petition with the expression of my opinion that the matter to which it refers is not yet ripe for legislation.<sup>112</sup>

Without the pronouncement of any opinion from the Queensland government, the Secretary of State was unable to advise the Queen to 'take any steps' on the separatist's petition.<sup>113</sup> This outcome highlights two factors that became a recurrent feature of future separatist agitation. First, the strategic approach of the

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<sup>110</sup> No author given quote cited in W. Ross Johnston, *The Call of the Land: A History of Queensland to the Present Day*. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1982: 81-82.

<sup>111</sup> Rockhampton has been acknowledged as the birthplace of separatist activity within the Colony of Queensland. In 1866 the first petition for separation was sent to the Imperial government. Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 508; Voss, 'Separatist Movements in Central Queensland in the Nineteenth Century': 36.

<sup>112</sup> M. O'Connell to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 January 1871, Letterbooks of Confidential Despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. PRV 8225/1/1, Queensland State Archives [QSA]: 17.



petitioners to seek Imperial action for what was essentially an internal colonial matter. And second, the Queensland government's reticence to deliberate on separatist issues. O'Connell later reasoned that the Ministry's inaction was closely associated with the maintenance of electoral support:

Mr. Palmer represents a constituency North of Dawes Range and that in the event of an election his seat would be endangered by any show of opposition to the Petition, whilst all the other Members of the Ministry...are representatives of southern constituencies, and therefore in the apparent interest of those who return them opposed to it.<sup>114</sup>

While O'Connell acknowledged there was a 'stratum of real grievances' against the Brisbane-based government, the early demise of the movement indicated its baser origin in Rockhampton's material demands.<sup>115</sup> Archibald Archer, a leading Separatist, later remarked that the movement 'collapsed like a pricked bladder....the moment the Government chose to pay the price.'<sup>116</sup> Palmer's 'railway compromise' was the price paid.<sup>117</sup> Construction on the westward extension commenced in May 1872 and was fairly continuous until the line reached Longreach in 1892.<sup>118</sup> George Thorn, Postmaster-General in Macalister's 1874-1876 ministry, additionally attributed the dormancy of Rockhampton's discontent to the public works he had approved for the region:

I gave the Rockhampton people that magnificent bridge that spans their river, and I gave them their post and telegraph office....The Rockhampton people received so many favours from the Government during the 4 to 5 years I was in office, that during the succeeding Parliaments the separation cry [was] dropped.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Lord Kimberly to Sir Maurice O'Connell 8 May 1871 cited in Voss, 'Separatist Movements in Central Queensland in the Nineteenth Century': 37.

<sup>114</sup> M. O'Connell to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 February 1871, Letterbooks of Confidential Despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. PRV 8225/1/1, QSA: 19.

<sup>115</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 510.

<sup>116</sup> Cited in Voss, 'Separatist Movements in Central Queensland in the Nineteenth Century': 42.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*: 41.

The root cause of separatist agitation can be broadly located in the languid manner with which the centralised administration responded and adjusted to the rapid economic development of the outlying frontier districts. Yet, the existing framework of regional rivalry did hamper the Government's ability to respond. The legislative process of the Brisbane-based government was frequently stalled by political pressure from regional factions on the conviction that it was either a perceived local threat or smacked of patronage. In the formulation of government policy on railways, the active participation of Queensland's virulent regionalism was unavoidable and resulted in the colony becoming heavy dependent on loans to construct the most decentralised rail system of any of the Australian colonies. While decentralised for the colony as a whole, the adopted railway policy of constructing lines westward from the coast was in effect a centralised policy for each of the regions. For once the rail links were established it attracted and directed a horizontal flow of inland traffic to each regions seaboard terminus, features that effectively strengthened political and economic regionalism.<sup>120</sup> In the long term, this resulted in four railway networks, originating at the coastal towns of Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns, with each line extending inland to the west. An essential requirement to ensure and sustain the anticipated regional expansion of settlement created by the construction of railways was the rapid introduction of population.

Concern over the size of Queensland's population had existed since the 1842 establishment of free settlement in the Moreton Bay District. Progress, the colonists argued, had been retarded by an inability to attract large numbers of

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<sup>120</sup> Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland*: 35-36.

southern settlers and was further compounded by New South Wales' retention of immigrants, whose passage had been financed by the District's contribution to the immigration fund.<sup>121</sup> The District was plagued from the outset with an 'almost insoluble' labour problem.<sup>122</sup> The magnitude and primacy of the District's chronic labour shortage was demonstrated in the Moreton Bay and Darling Downs pastoralists' resolute support for the Colonial Office's early-1850s push to resume convict transportation; significantly deviating from the mother colony's strong opposition. Moreover, as William Coote asserted, the extreme scarcity of labour was the initial 'burden of their cry' for separation.<sup>123</sup> The want of immigrant labour remained after separation, as Governor Bowen declared it to be 'the most pressing need of Queensland...to develop the rich and varied resources and capabilities of our vast territory'.<sup>124</sup> Immigration was therefore considered a paramount issue in the concerted drive to accelerate Queensland's development. Anxious to expand its population as rapidly as possible, the Queensland government instituted a vigorous program of state-assisted immigration. Statistically, immigration accounted for 70 per cent of Queensland's growth in population, from the approximately 25,000 inhabitants on Bowen's arrival in 1859 to 99,901 in 1868 and 213,525 in 1881.<sup>125</sup> This apparent success was however counteracted by the problematic elements of Queensland's immigration schemes.

Discontent among members of the Government and the community as a whole was provoked by the large expense involved and the perceived inefficiency of the

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<sup>121</sup> Johnston, *The Call of the Land*: 84; Rolfe, 'The First Parliament of Queensland': 102.

<sup>122</sup> Knox, 'Moreton Bay Separation': 564.

<sup>123</sup> Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*: 121.

<sup>124</sup> Bowen to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 December 1860 cited in Joyce, 'George Ferguson Bowen and Robert George Wyndham Herbert': 28.

<sup>125</sup> Lane-Poole (ed.) *Thirty Years of Colonial Government*: 108; J. Lavery, 'The Queensland Economy 1860-1915,' D.J. Murphy, R.B. Joyce, and Colin A. Hughes, (eds.), *Prelude to Power: The Rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885-1915*. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1970: 28-44.

administrative machinery required in securing and despatching 'desirable' immigrants to Queensland. Queensland instituted a generous program of land grants and assisted passages to induce settlers to the colony and to overcome the appeal of America, Brazil, New Zealand and the other Australian colonies as migrant destinations.<sup>126</sup> An innate problem in the colony's ardent desire for immigrants was the significant cost incurred in the application of its immigration program. Anthony Trollope succinctly detailed the force and persistence of this ardency in 1876; the 'colony, from the first, has been quite alive to the expediency – it may be said necessity – of bidding high for Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen, and has been tempted to bid too high.'<sup>127</sup> To finance the strong commitment to immigration the 'revenue-poor' Queensland government expanded its borrowing.

By the mid-1860s, Queensland's increasing cycle of public debt, to underwrite the costs of its two major developmental projects of immigration and rail construction, had placed the economy on a precarious standing.<sup>128</sup> Beset by the effects of a prolonged drought, low wool prices and stock losses due to the outbreak of pleuro-pneumonia, the vulnerability of the colony's pastoral dependent economy was exposed. The onset of an overseas financial crisis was the final assault, paralysing Queensland's economy. Colonial Secretary Arthur Macalister advised the Governor on 14 July 1866:

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<sup>126</sup> Wayne O'Donohue, 'First Agent-General: Development of the Office in London, 1860-1876,' *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 11: 3 (1982): 59-74.

<sup>127</sup> Cited in Johnston, *The Call of the Land*: 84.

<sup>128</sup> In May 1866 the Loan Act provided for the borrowing of £1,170,950 for the principal items of Immigration £200,000 and the construction of rail lines from Ipswich to Dalby £432,350, Toowoomba to Warwick £388,700 and for the Great Northern Railway £54,000. Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 35; David Bruce Cameron, 'An Historical Assessment of Economic Development, Manufacturing and the Political Economy in Queensland, 1900 to 1930', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 1999: 58-59.

The government account at the bank is largely overdrawn; our credit is stopped, and the Government cheques dishonoured. We are landing thousands of immigrants upon our shores without the means of paying for landing them from the ships, or of supporting them for a single hour. We are largely indebted for the conveyance of these immigrants from England, without the present means of meeting such indebtedness.<sup>129</sup>

The resultant curtailment of public works, mass unemployment and the hardship experienced by residents and the newly arrived migrants, provoked considerable social unrest within the colony and brought the policy of immigration under serious public scrutiny. Offsetting the demands for the permanent cessation of immigration was the gradual restoration of economic prosperity and the aggravation of labour shortages, both stimulated by the discovery of gold at Gympie in 1867.<sup>130</sup> Criticism was then redirected to the type of immigrant rather than the numbers arriving.

Optimistically, Henry Jordan, Queensland's first Emigration Agent in Great Britain, claimed that the colony's generous state-assisted immigration program would attract 'the best class of honest, industrious, hard-working men, of good character and provident habits.'<sup>131</sup> In practice, the type of immigrants introduced into the colony failed to meet community expectations. Censure was commonly directed towards the inefficiency of the selection process, but an inherent feature of the discord over the calibre of immigrants was the divergent social visions on land usage between Liberal/agrarianism and pastoralism. Agrarian aspirations, to diversify the economy and settle the land with 'thrifty and contented' immigrants who cultivated the soil, materially challenged the pastoral industry's dominance of the economy.<sup>132</sup> Agrarian petitioners consequently argued that:

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<sup>129</sup> Macalister to Bowen 14 July 1866 cited in Johnston, *The Call of the Land*: 85.

<sup>130</sup> Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 157.

<sup>131</sup> Report from Jordan, 21 January 1863 cited in O'Donohue, 'First Agent-General': 62.

<sup>132</sup> *Guardian*, 31 March 1860 cited in Rolfe, 'The First Parliament of Queensland': 77.

in order to encourage agriculture and make it a great, prosperous and permanent interest in this colony, Queensland must be attractive as a field of immigration to English agriculturalists who by their skill and capital would convert the present barren and unprofitable wilderness into a fruitful field.<sup>133</sup>

The introduction of the land order system of rewarding adult immigrants who paid their own passage to Queensland, with the allocation of land to the value of £18, superficially fulfilled the function of enticing a type of immigrant conducive to agricultural pursuits. Numerous factors eroded its merit. The location and smallness of the farm blocks often proved unworkable. Further, for reasons of inexperience, lack of finances or unwillingness to undertake the backbreaking labour involved, many migrants preferred to reside in Brisbane or other coastal towns. Land orders consequently became a tradable commodity and a boon for pastoralists who were the primary purchasers of the orders. It was consequently argued, that the failure of the land order system to settle migrants on the land and their resultant assemblage in towns was linked to the duplicity of squatters and their desire to secure a surplus of labour.<sup>134</sup>

Liberals argued that pastoralists had deliberately created a pool of labour that, when seasonally employed, would bolster the industry and enhance its economic supremacy. Externally the land order system presented agrarian features, but its central design was an economically rational objective of using the land to entice migrants to colony. The offer of land to attract immigrants was a consequential solution to the tenuous state of Queensland's revenue, which precluded the colony from offering monetary incentives to obtain a much-needed supply of labour. That the land set aside for this purpose did not present the new settlers with the means

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<sup>133</sup> *Moreton Bay Courier*, 25 August 1860 cited in *Ibid*: 80.

<sup>134</sup> Kingston, 'The Search for an Alternative to Free Selection': 6; Rolfe, 'The First Parliament of Queensland': 95.

to attain self-sufficiency was of little consequence and in this aspect the Liberal suspicion of the pastoral dominated legislature appears warranted.<sup>135</sup> To the Liberal collective it was clear-cut that the machinations of pastoral interests underpinned the various amendments to the land order system and the assisted immigration schemes and were directed towards the creation of a labour pool. The *Courier* therefore considered the system of land orders as being:

Highly satisfactory to the squatting interests, more especially to the members of it who are beginning to find out that their runs are capable of improvement, and that a liberal application of labour is necessary....But to small employers in the towns – to the small agricultural settlers – to the great bulk of the population...the present system is almost useless.<sup>136</sup>

Pastoral impediments to agricultural settlement were particularly apparent in the land legislation. The provision of a system of survey before selection resulted in significant delays in the promised immediate settlement of intending agriculturalists. The *Moreton Bay Courier* argued that this was further compounded by the 'culpable dilatoriness and insouciance of the Survey Department'.<sup>137</sup> New migrants were, as a consequence, forced to remain in Brisbane often in 'miserable and disgusting circumstances' and to meet these financial constraints many were compelled to abandon their claims.<sup>138</sup> In contrast to the expressed ideal of proclaiming agricultural reserves to attract population, the Liberals argued that the location, the limited amount, the high price and often the poor quality of the land made available for selection was more conducive as a deterrent to settlement.<sup>139</sup> The object of the land legislation, the *Empire* concluded, was 'to keep the newcomer out and retain the whole of the back country – to an

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<sup>135</sup> Rolfe, 'The First Parliament of Queensland': 104-108.

<sup>136</sup> *Moreton Bay Courier*, 5 February 1861 cited in *Ibid*: 107.

<sup>137</sup> *Moreton Bay Courier*, 5 February 1861 cited in *Ibid*: 110.

<sup>138</sup> *Courier*, 18 December 1861 cited in *Ibid*: 110; Kingston, 'The Search for an Alternative to Free Selection':

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<sup>139</sup> Rolfe, 'The First Parliament of Queensland': 98.

unlimited extent – as a commonage for the squatter.<sup>140</sup> The Liberal hope of initiating large-scale agricultural settlement in the colony was forestalled by the fact that the colony's immigration scheme was not an independent or discrete government policy and featured only as a component of the broader land policy. The Government's desire for population was therefore ostensibly geared towards the supply of labour rather than the settlement of agriculturalists.<sup>141</sup>

The immigration boom of the 1870s and 1880s, attached to the government's policy of aggressive development and financed by the commitment of vast sums of borrowed money, occasioned some assurance of government support for the establishment of agriculture.<sup>142</sup> The Liberal preference for the thrifty farmer type was continually frustrated by the persistent problems entailed in the pastoralist designed land legislation, migrant departures to the southern colonies, a general disinclination for farming and a preference for town life.<sup>143</sup> A tenacious feature of the Queensland government's involvement in economic development, through its land, rail and immigration policies, was that it revolved around a principal reliance on pastoralism. The *Brisbane Courier* asked despairingly in 1865, 'are we eternally condemned to be buried under a mountain of wool, hides and tallow?'<sup>144</sup>

Advocates for the diversification of the economy argued that through a surplus production of agricultural raw products, an industrial manufacturing sector would develop and provide substantial economic support. The fostering of local

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*: 88.

<sup>141</sup> Johnston, *The Call of the Land*: 84, 89; Rolfe, 'The First Parliament of Queensland': 110–117.

<sup>142</sup> From 1871 to 1875 Queensland borrowed £2,800,000 and became the leading colonial borrower. A further loan in the late 1870s of £5,800,000 maintained this position. Johnston, *The Call of the Land*: 89.

<sup>143</sup> The 1881 census calculated that throughout the 1870s there had been a border loss of 2,000 people per year. Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland*: 35; Johnston, *The Call of the Land*: 89–90.

<sup>144</sup> 16 September 1865 cited in Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland*: 35.



manufacturing was persistently overpowered by the government's baser pastoral developmental aim, in which capital and labour were too valuable to be employed elsewhere. The Registrar-General consequently reported in 1861 that:

Manufactories can hardly be said to have any existence in Queensland, nor does it seem in the least probable that the attention of its inhabitants will be turned to them for many years to come; the production of raw materials and the occupation of its vast unreclaimed territory will, for a long time, be more than sufficient to employ all their capital and energy.<sup>145</sup>

The government-sanctioned diversion of capital and labour to assist in the agricultural pursuit of cotton in the 1860s was a notable variant, though it was qualified by the emphasis solely on cultivation rather than the combination of primary and secondary production. Interest in the rapid production of cotton in Queensland was peaked by two interrelated factors brought about by the Civil War in America. First, the war had significantly reduced Britain's supply of cotton and this triggered an upsurge in the market price for cotton. Queensland's new legislature therefore offered growers inducements of land for plantations and a cotton subsidy of fourpence a pound to accelerate the development of the existent infant industry into an agricultural staple which could re-supply Britain's mills and complement the pastoral staple of wool.<sup>146</sup> Aided by these government initiatives, the area under cultivation would expanded to 11,034 acres in 1867, with 6,196 acres concentrated around Ipswich and this instilled a general confidence in Queensland's potential to become a great cotton-growing country.<sup>147</sup> Governor Bowen reported to the Secretary of State for the Colonies:

The subject of cotton engrosses at the present moment a large share of the attention of the press and of the public generally, in this colony. It is felt that

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<sup>145</sup> Cameron, 'An Historical Assessment of Economic Development': 61.

<sup>146</sup> Johnston, *The Call of the Land*: 57; Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 126.

<sup>147</sup> Statistically as Bill Thorpe clearly illustrated Queensland was never likely to become a significant cotton-producing nation. While Queensland rated as Australia's largest exporter of raw cotton, sending £1,708 worth to Britain in 1863, on the world scale of producers this output was infinitesimal in comparison to the principal producer India whose output was valued at £27,545,116 and the lower end European Turkey £112,373. Thorpe, *Colonial Queensland*: 118.

nothing more fortunate for the steady prosperity of Queensland could occur than that, while pastoral settlers spread over the highlands and downs of the interior, some enterprising capitalist or association of capitalists, should introduce on an extensive scale the cultivation of cotton on the eastern seaboard and on the banks of the rivers.<sup>148</sup>

Despite the ostensible promotion of agriculture, the manner in which the government directed this development was corrosive to agrarian aspirations. Government support of the production of cotton encouraged the development of large-scale resource rich plantations in response to the economic position of the colony and the requirement of considerable capital, before a viable crop was possible; factors that prevented the mass production of cotton by independent small-scale holdings. Liberal opinion was outraged by what they perceived as a conspiracy to form an agricultural counterpart to the squatter – a new planter class. Acrimony was further aroused by the assertion that a plentiful and cheap supply of labour was required to ensure the success of the industry.<sup>149</sup>

Petitions to the Legislative Assembly in 1860, from cultivators, detailed the contentious claim that for the profitable production of cotton, coloured labour was indispensable. Bowen was conjointly requested, through further petitions, 'to approach the Government of India with a view to facilitating Coolie immigration to Queensland.'<sup>150</sup> Bowen was a significant patron for the introduction of this form of labour; a position that rested on his sincere conviction that white men were incapable of the strenuous work required in the northern areas of the colony. To the Secretary of State for the Colonies Bowen argued that:

All reasonable men of every side admit that if the resources of the vast intertropical districts of Queensland are to be developed at all, they must be

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<sup>148</sup> Lane-Poole (ed.) *Thirty Years of Colonial Government*: 116-117.

<sup>149</sup> Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 126-127; Johnston, *The Call of the Land*: 57; Rolfe, 'The First Parliament of Queensland': 118 –119.

<sup>150</sup> Quote cited in Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 126.

developed by the aid of Asiatics of some race, and that, if capitalists and colonising companies are not permitted to introduce Indian labour under proper regulations and supervision, they will ere long deluge Northern Australia with Chinese, Malays, Polynesians, and hordes of other barbarians under no regulations or supervision whatsoever.<sup>151</sup>

Enlivened to the opportunity to accelerate development, the Queensland Parliament passed the *Indian Immigration Act* in 1862, which provided the conditions under which 'Asiatics' could be indentured to work in the colony.<sup>152</sup> In essence, the Act restricted government assistance to European migrants and did not materially interfere with the private importation of Asiatic labour.<sup>153</sup> Although no indentured Indian labour was employed in the development of cotton, forestalled by the slowness of the negotiations with the Indian Government, the passage of the Act did present the government's tacit approval for the engagement of a cheap coloured labour force on economically imperative grounds. Those opposed to coloured immigration strongly expounded the potentially degenerative impact that Indian labour would have on Queensland's emergent British society.

'Coolies are not a mere question of labour or productivity' declared Reverend John Dunmore Lang, the renowned Presbyterian political activist.<sup>154</sup> Lang argued that it was 'a question deeply involving both the social and political and the moral and religious advance of our adopted country.'<sup>155</sup> Opponents therefore feared that the introduction of coloured labour would create a caste system and divide the colony

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<sup>151</sup> Bowen to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 July 1862 cited in Joyce, 'George Ferguson Bowen and Robert George Wyndham Herbert': 29.

<sup>152</sup> Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 126.

<sup>153</sup> Rolfe, 'The First Parliament of Queensland': 122.

<sup>154</sup> John Dunmore Lang (1799-1878) Presbyterian minister, politician, educationalist and propagandist. Emigrated from Glasgow in October 1822 to Sydney and was Australia's second Presbyterian minister and the first on the mainland. Renown for his overly abrupt and questionable methods, Lang visited Moreton Bay in November 1845 and became involved in the District's separationist fight and fervently opposed the 'flood' of Irish immigrants to the area and instituted an immigration scheme to amend this. The first of three vessels the *Fortitude* arrived in Moreton Bay in January 1849 with 245 protestant immigrants. Quote cited in Fowler, 'Queensland 1860-1888', 33; Mark Hutchinson, 'John Dunmore Lang', Brian Dickey, (ed.), *The Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*. Sydney: Evangelical History Association, 1994: 209-13.

into two antagonistic classes of patricians and poor labourers. In a petition to the Queen, drafted at a public meeting in July 1862, opposition to the government's 'Coolie Bill' was directed towards its perceived goal:

to crush the democratic tendencies natural to a new colony like this, and to throw the country into the hands of a few princely squatters and planters each lording isolated grandeur in the midst of serfs who will never dream of calling or thinking themselves his equals.<sup>156</sup>

The non-introduction of Indian labour, and the disintegration of the cotton industry, with the cessation of the Civil War in America did not negate the bitter debate over coloured labour, the issue was effectively transferred, with increased intensity into 'the germ of an industry which will very probably become hereafter of great importance to the Colony'.<sup>157</sup>

Prompted by the success of experiments in the cultivation of sugar, the Queensland government instituted legislation to expedite the development of this potentially profitable industry. Gazetted in 1864, the *Sugar and Coffee Regulations* offered similar inducements to those that were presented to cotton growers: beneficent lease arrangements for land to establish plantations and bounties. Following this legislative encouragement and southern and overseas capital investment, sugar production rapidly expanded from the 20 acres under cultivation in 1862, to just over 14,600 acres in 1874, with a concentration around Mackay, Maryborough and Beenleigh.<sup>158</sup> In this early expansionary period, the extremity of labour shortages again loomed as the major obstacle to the prospective economic

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<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Rolfe, 'The First Parliament of Queensland': 123.

<sup>157</sup> Kay Saunders, 'The Kanakas are Coming', in Evans, Saunders, and Cronin, (eds.), *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*: 149-51; Statistical Register for 1862 cited in Kingston, 'The Search for an Alternative to Free Selection': 4.

<sup>158</sup> In 1874 Queensland produced, for the first time, enough sugar to met her own domestic needs and an export quantity of 230 tons of refined and 3,400 tons of raw sugar; Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920*. 75; Kingston, 'The Search for an Alternative to Free Selection': 4; Peter Griggs,

success of sugar cultivation. The desperate labour situation prompted the *Courier* to appeal in December 1863, '[w]here can we get labourers to meet our requirements?'<sup>159</sup> The August 1863 experimental introduction, by the 'enterprising capitalist' Captain Robert Towns, of 67 Pacific Islanders from the New Hebrides and Loyalty Islands presented the long-term yet controversial solution.<sup>160</sup>

Charles Bernays' succinct overview of the enduring impact of Towns' experimental introduction is a useful gauge of the political, social and economic repercussions of Queensland's adoption of a coloured labour policy, which commenced a forty-year trade in Pacific Island labour:

Who could have believed, that the advent of this, perhaps the least objectionable class of black labour, would in time to come have led...to the division of political parties, to bitter political strife, to acute personal differences among our leading politicians, to numerous social evils of varying kinds, and in the ultimate to shocking tragedy – murder, rapine, kidnapping, and all the violence attendant upon buccaneering in its very worst form. So large a part did this trade play in legislation and administration extending over a long series of years, that the subject could by no means be overlooked when relating the political history of the State.<sup>161</sup>

The pervasiveness of the coloured labour question was not solely confined to the Queensland context. Its influence was far-reaching and extended into the wider political and social realms of the other Australian colonies and into the Imperial domain. As a prominent and enduring issue Queensland's employment of a

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'Sugar Plantations in Queensland, 1864-1912: Origins, Characteristics, Distribution, and Decline,' *Agricultural History*, 74: 3 (Summer 2000): 609-48.

<sup>159</sup> 10 December 1863 cited in Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 127.

<sup>160</sup> As Indian labourer proved unavailable, the cotton grower Robert Towns was prompted to find an alternative source of labour. Familiar with the Pacific Islanders through his connection with the sandalwood industry in the Pacific Towns' 'recruited' 67 for his Logan River Cotton plantation. It was Louis Hope who first utilised Melanesian labour in the production of sugar. In July 1864 the schooner *Uncle Tom* landed 54 island labourers that Hope employed on his Ormiston property. Clive Moore, *Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay*. Port Moresby: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and University of Papua New Guinea, 1985: 24, 167; Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 126, 236.

<sup>161</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 64.

coloured labour force would permeate the broader question of political federation in a decisive and diverse manner.

Local opposition to the introduction of this form of labour into Queensland was immediate. Theophilus Pugh<sup>162</sup> fervently asserted within days of the Islanders arrival in Brisbane, that Towns' had instituted a 'slave trade in Queensland'.<sup>163</sup> Further, he professed that 'it is clear that the Government are winking at the disgraceful transaction; it behoves the representatives of the people, therefore, to be up and doing, to suppress this traffic in its infancy.'<sup>164</sup> The two main components of Pugh's remonstrance, the categorisation of the labour force as slavery and the government's perceived complicity in this process comprised the core arguments that were repeatedly used in the progressively more authoritative and vocal external and internal campaign opposed to Queensland's continued employment of a coloured labour force.

The nature of indentured service, adopted in Queensland for Pacific Islanders, was continually and variously decried by numerous opponents of the trade, as temporary slavery or a cousin of slavery.<sup>165</sup> Melanesians in Queensland were never 'slaves', yet as indentured labourers they were a form of highly unfree labour subject to stringent legal and social discrimination.<sup>166</sup> Recruitment practices

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<sup>162</sup> Theophilus Pugh (1831-1896) Journalist, Publisher and Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly. Pugh though the Member for Brisbane and North Brisbane from 1863 – 1870 is best known for his yearly chronicle of Queensland published under the title of *Pugh's Almanac*. Waterson, *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929*. 154.

<sup>163</sup> B.H. Molesworth, 'Kanakan Labour in Queensland: 1863-1871,' *Journal of Historical Society of Queensland*, 1: 1-6 (1914-1919): 140-54.

<sup>164</sup> Quote cited in Saunders, 'The Kanakas are Coming': 150.

<sup>165</sup> Kay Saunders, 'The Servant Bound: The Nature of Indentured Service', in Evans, Saunders, and Cronin, (eds.), *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*: 167-175.

<sup>166</sup> Slavery was a legal status lasting for life and transmitted to every child of a female slave. As the legal property of their owner slaves could be sold, bequeathed, mortgaged or hired like any other chattel. The

were from the outset the most problematic feature. Kay Saunders conservatively estimated that between twenty-five and thirty per cent of the Islanders brought to Queensland were recruited through illegal or nefarious methods.<sup>167</sup> Within the narrower confines of Queensland's prevailing emphasis on rapid development the employment of coloured labour was 'acclaimed as a means by which Queensland might exalt itself into an immensely wealthy State.'<sup>168</sup> In this categorical manifestation of economic expediency overriding moral considerations, emphasis must be directed not solely towards its initial introduction as a temporary measure but to the set of variables that ensured its continued existence.

Queensland's particularly strident developmental aspirations are generally identified as being the result of the colony's late settlement and attainment of self-government in conjunction with the under-developed nature of its vast resources. The early pattern of development that evolved after the colony's 1859 separation from New South Wales was as a consequence of these factors heavily influenced by an interaction of individual and co-operative material desires and ideologies, that emphasised aggressive economic progress to overhaul the colony's delayed start. To generate momentum, contentious methods to advance and establish settlement and to overcome labour shortages were largely condoned. The viewpoint advanced to rationalise the introduction of coloured labour was, as Bernays' argued, simply that Queensland was 'a British colony endeavouring to solve its economic problems by the importation of labour.'<sup>169</sup> The insistence then, by the pastoral/sugar sector, that Melanesians would be a temporary labour aid to

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Queensland indentured contract was for a specific period of time and legally void if not voluntarily undertaken. Moore, *Kanaka*: 153; Saunders, 'The Servant Bound': 168.

<sup>167</sup> Saunders, 'The Servant Bound': 167.

<sup>168</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 65.

activate growth, initially restricted their period of employment to within Queensland's early developmental phase.<sup>170</sup> Controlling factors persistently delayed the abolition of coloured labour.

By 1868, 1,763 Pacific Island labourers had been brought to Queensland and were primarily employed, in equal numbers, in the pastoral and sugar industries.<sup>171</sup>

The success of this experimental phase had demonstrated both the ease of importation and its economical advantages. Planters in the expanding sugar industry became alert to the potential benefits of this plentiful and cheap source of labour and rapidly the labour of indentured Melanesians became an indispensable condition to the profitable cultivation of sugar. The 1881 census statistics illustrates the concentration of labour in the sugar industry. Of the 6,348 Islanders in the colony, 5,075 were categorised as agricultural labourers.<sup>172</sup> The ascendancy of sugar as an agricultural staple, from the late 1860s, was hailed as a direct reflection of the involvement of Melanesian labour. Sugar-planters, such as William Canny, the plantation owner of Eaton Vale at Maryborough, were therefore keen to impress upon the public their need for the maintenance of this form of servile labour:

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> Patricia Mercer, *White Australia Defied: Pacific Islander Settlement in North Queensland*. Townsville: Dept of History and Politics, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1995: 2; Kay Saunders, 'Massa Palmer's Black Labourer': The Fear of Social Contamination', in Evans, Saunders, and Cronin, (eds.), *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*: 152-166.

<sup>171</sup> This total was accrued quite slowly in the first four years with an average of 150 recruits per year spiking in 1867 with 1,237 recruits arriving in Queensland. The maritime industries of Beche-de-mer fishing and pearl shelling also employed Pacific Islanders however the statistics for these sectors were not routinely collected. The 1868 Report of the Immigration Agent stated that 30 Islanders had been employed in the beche-de-mer fisheries. Frank Jardine, Somerset's Police Magistrate estimated in a private letter to A.H. Palmer dated 15 August 1871, that there were between 300 and 400 Pacific Islanders at work in the Torres Strait but in the same year he told Governor Normandy there were about 900. The latter figure may have included Torres Strait Islanders. Steve Mullins, 'Queensland's Quest for Torres Strait: The Delusion of Inevitability,' *Journal of Pacific History*, 27: 2 (1992): 165-80; Charles A. Price and Elizabeth Baker, 'Origins of Pacific Island Labourers in Queensland, 1863-1904: A Research Note,' *Journal of Pacific History*, 2: 2 (1976): 106-21

<sup>172</sup> Peter Corris, 'Pacific Island Labour Migrants in Queensland,' *Journal of Pacific History*, 5 (1970): 43-64.



From my own knowledge of the district, I believe there would not be a stick of cane growing if this description of coloured labour was stopped and some other form of cheap labour was not substituted for it.<sup>173</sup>

More directly, the *Queenslander* asserted that it was 'not because we have any love of black skins and high favours, but simply because it is impossible to carry out certain industries at profit with whites.'<sup>174</sup> The economic success of sugar and its continual northward expansion, along with the conventional wisdom that white men were incapable of the arduous labour involved in tropical agriculture, increasingly confirmed Liberal fears that the use of imported coloured labour was becoming a permanent part of the colony's economic development.

The absence of any government legislation to regulate the recruitment or employment of Pacific Island labour, W.H. Palmer supportively declared, 'enables any capitalist to import and employ what labour he pleases.'<sup>175</sup> Government sanction, through legislative inaction, prevailed until the public's vocal reproach of the horrific abuses perpetuated in the recruiting process demanded legislative redress. In the face of this sustained pressure, the Queensland Parliament passed, in March 1868, 'An Act to Regulate and Control the Introduction and Treatment of Polynesian Labourers'.<sup>176</sup> This legislation contained provisions that were inadequate to furnish the effective regulation of recruitment practices. The missionary John Inglis therefore observed that: 'It looks as if [the] Acts were passed rather with a view to blind the public rather than to operate as a means of protecting the poor natives.'<sup>177</sup> The problematic features of the labour trade

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<sup>173</sup> Quote cited in Kay Saunders, "Frolicsome Urchins?" The 'Reliable' Servant', in Evans, Saunders, and Cronin, (eds.), *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*: 157-166.

<sup>174</sup> 6 May 1871 cited in Saunders, "Frolicsome Urchins?" The 'Reliable' Servant': 157-158.

<sup>175</sup> *Courier*, 24 August 1863 cited in Saunders, 'The Kanakas are Coming': 149.

<sup>176</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 66.

<sup>177</sup> Quote cited in John Kay, (ed.), *The Slave Trade in the New Hebrides*. Edinburgh: Edmonstone and Douglas: 1872: 6.

continued as the Reverend W. Osbourne Lilley's biography of the staunch opponent of coloured labour William Brookes detailed:

the labour trade went on with its vile characteristics little lessened. It became evident to the most unbelieving that robbery, pillage, rapine, drunkenness, lust, murder, kidnapping were exceedingly hard to 'regulate', and that there was something dishonourable in even trying to 'regulate' such abominations; but the efforts to do so were continued on as for appearance sake.<sup>178</sup>

What had been in dispute was not the morality of the whole system of indentured coloured labour, but the recruiter's methods. Regulation rather than abolition of the labour trade was the persistent feature of the Queensland government's management of the issue in the 1860s and 1870s. In the minimal and piecemeal nature of reform, even in light of further evidence of continued abuses in recruitment and employer's treatment, detailed in two Select Committee inquiries, the government demonstrated its reluctance to hinder in any way the numbers of Melanesians arriving in the colony.<sup>179</sup> Inherent in the government's approach was the resolute domination of economic expediency over moral concerns. A state of affairs that George Carrington critically observed in his 1871 publication, *Colonial Adventures and Experiences by a University Man*: 'The great object of the Queensland legislation has been from the beginning, how to get cheap labour in the colony; that is the grand legislative idea of prosperity, cheap labour at any price.'<sup>180</sup> The tenacity with which the Queensland government maintained the colony's commitment to the employment of coloured labour increasingly drew widespread and significant condemnation.

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<sup>178</sup> Quote cited in Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 241.

<sup>179</sup> The 1869 Select Committee endorsement of the workings of the 1868 legislation was not surprising for as D.K. Dignan points out 'six of the seven members were known to favour the traffic and some even employed Kanaka labour; D.K. Dignan cited in Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 242.

<sup>180</sup> Quote cited in Kathryn Cronin, 'From Plodding 'Paddy' to 'The Ching-Chong Chinaman': The Chinese Rural Labourer' in Evans, Saunders, and Cronin, (eds.), *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*: 237-253.

Enraged by the reported brutality of recruiters from Fiji and Queensland, the British parliament enacted its own legislation in 1872. *The Pacific Islanders Protection Act*, more commonly referred to as 'The Kidnapping Act of 1872', endeavoured to prevent and punish the morally reprehensible recruiting practices of the labour trade.<sup>181</sup> In 1875 additional 'drastic provisions' were enacted, in an amendment to the Act, as a measure to further deter any 'Criminal Outrages upon Natives' and a new regulatory system of government was created, the Western Pacific High Commission.<sup>182</sup> More vociferous than the British government's disapproval was the British, New South Wales, Victorian and local populace's opposition. The strength of feeling, particularly outside Queensland, against the colony's employment of an imported cheap subservient workforce with few rights and little government protection, rested initially on concerns over the broader societal ramifications. Opponents, in general, subscribed to the view, expressed in the debate over Indian 'coolie' labour, that the existence of this 'class' of labour would have a socially, morally and politically 'deteriorating influence' on the type of British society being fashioned in Australia.<sup>183</sup> Galvanising the fear that a caste system would be created in Queensland was the 1870s northward expansion of sugar cultivation. The plantation style of production predominated, employing the overwhelming majority of Melanesians in the colony. That these plantations were seen to resemble, in their 'benevolent feudalism', the old plantations of the American South intensified external and internal contempt for Queensland's

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<sup>181</sup> 'Despatches Forwarding Western Pacific Orders in Council', *Journals of the Queensland Legislative Council* [JQLC]: 29:1(1880): 223-24.

<sup>182</sup> Moore, *Kanaka*: 31-32, 130; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 67.

<sup>183</sup> Saunders, 'Massa Palmer's Black Labourer': 153.

defiant maintenance of this labour force.<sup>184</sup> A British article in the *Leeds Mercury* consequently declared:

Queensland will be severed from her sister colonies by the character of the institutions that her physical conditions must impose upon her. [The author] thinks it more likely that the impact of slaves, under the name of free labour, from the Indies, China, and the South Seas, may make her a second South Carolina – a State ruled by an oligarchy with the vices of a slave-holding Government.<sup>185</sup>

On the local front, the whole question had increasingly become a contentious political issue. Remonstrations from Liberals, imbued with racialism, detailed the dangers of social contamination from this coloured labour force. It was argued that the existence of a different immigrant race and culture could irreparably damage the white community through their presence, their inferiority and their vice.<sup>186</sup> For the *Northern Miner* then it was:

not only the right, but the duty of the governing power of the supreme race to preserve it from deterioration morally and physically, and to repress by statute the unnatural desires and unholy cupidity of planters and squatters to associate themselves with “human vermin” for the purpose of making money.<sup>187</sup>

Another developing force in opposition, backed up by Liberal politicians, was the burgeoning pressure group of white labour, which saw the extremely cheap employment terms of the Melanesians as an economic threat. Anthony Trollope indicated that by 1873 white labourers had become ‘quite as zealous in the cause as the philanthropist at home; but he in his zeal hates the shining Polynesian....for...underselling the white man’s labour after a fashion most nefarious to the white labourer’s imagination!’<sup>188</sup> White workers campaigned for the restriction of this imported class of labourers to tropical or semi-tropical

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<sup>184</sup> Cilento and Lack (eds), *Triumph in the Tropics*: 291.

<sup>185</sup> Quote cited in Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 241.

<sup>186</sup> Johnston, *The Call of the Land*: 59-60.

<sup>187</sup> 26 May 1877 cited in Robert Tan, ‘The Chinese Question in Queensland During Nineteenth Century: A Brief History of Racial Conflict’, Unpublished BA Hons Thesis, University of Queensland, 1958: 23.

agriculture, initiating the first semblance of a platform that demanded the racial segregation of the labour force.

The accelerant in the crystallisation of a determined policy of racial division was the mid-1870s 'Chinese invasion' of Queensland's expanding mining frontier, in particular their concentration on the colony's latest discovered goldfields.<sup>189</sup> By 1877 the estimated number of Chinese resident in Queensland was 12,801.<sup>190</sup> In their apparent success the Chinese were perceived as a real threat, both economically and socially.<sup>191</sup> The *Darling Downs Gazette* consequently invoked racial theorems to argue that the Chinese:

have to be utterly destroyed after a struggle and a slaughter such as the world has never yet witnessed....in the most stupendous struggle for supremacy and existence since the globe was created. Either there must be a fusion or a survival of the fittest!<sup>192</sup>

Anti-Chinese legislation was enacted in 1877. The *Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act* introduced a poll tax of £10 on each Chinese entering the colony and placed a limit on the number of Chinese that each vessel entering a Queensland port was permitted to carry; the proportion was one to every ten tons of the ship's capacity.<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, restrictions were introduced which debarred the Chinese

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<sup>188</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*. Melbourne: Robertson, 1873 cited in Johnston, *A Documentary History of Queensland*: 227-228.

<sup>189</sup> J.F. Conway, 'The Chinese Invasion', *Northern Miner*, 26 May 1877 cited in *Ibid*: 291.

<sup>190</sup> Queensland Parliament. Legislative Assembly (1859-1922), *Coloured Labour in Queensland: A Collection of Papers Ordered to be Printed by the Legislative Assembly, 1861-1906. Volume 1*. Brisbane: Government Printer and Pugh's Printing Office, 1861-1906: 2.

<sup>191</sup> The *Queenslander* asserted in 1875 that the 'impression' on the Palmer goldfield was that the Chinese 'got' three-quarters of the gold. A second and broader economic issue was the exportation of their gold yield to China. In 1877, excluding the considerable smuggling trade, gold exports to China amounted to nearly £250,000. Worker resentment invariably incorporated racial stereotyping to demarcate the industrious Chinese as 'one of the greatest evils' which would in all 'probability...entirely supplant European labour' and use 'his wily ways to tempt unsuspecting and inevitably innocent white women into his opium-filled lair; and also as a carrier of disease which would wipe out the flowering manhood of the Colony.' Elaine Thompson, *Fair Enough: Egalitarianism in Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1994: 30-33; Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 224-230.

<sup>192</sup> *Darling Downs Gazette*, 4 June 1877 cited in Kathryn Cronin, 'On a Fast Boat To Queensland: The Chinese Influx onto Queensland's Goldfields', Evans, Saunders, and Cronin, (eds.), *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*: 254-288.

<sup>193</sup> The penalties for ship owners of any breach of these regulations were particularly steep: failure to pay the poll-tax incurred a £20 for each Chinese landed without payment and for each Chinese passenger brought in

from entering any new goldfield for three years. The overarching intention of these discriminatory measures, John Douglas, Queensland's then premier later recounted, was 'to prevent the typical character of our colonisation from being imperilled'.<sup>194</sup> Exhibited in the initial opposition to 'kanaka' labour and the more fervent campaign against the Chinese were the characteristic racist arguments of social contamination and economic threat repeatedly employed to protest the existence of a 'servile race amongst us'.<sup>195</sup> It would however require the further development of oppositional organisations and a series of fundamental shifts in white colonists' attitudes before the more pervasive economically expedient approach was counteracted.

Aided by their numeric dominance in the legislature, the squatter/planter alliance presented a powerful blockade to any Liberal endeavours to alter materially the system of private importation and employment of coloured labour. Introduced into parliament in 1877 and 1878, the 'Polynesian Labourers Act Amendment Bills' attempted to address the concerns of a growing section of the community, in particular the unrestricted nature of Pacific Islander employment. Both pieces of legislation met with the same fate and were shelved once they reached the second reading stage.<sup>196</sup> The most politically effective and frequent retort to any ideological opposition to indenture labour was the application of the economic argument, which directed attention to the sugar industry's increasing contribution to the Queensland economy and this routinely exacted government compliance. Sugar production was described as a 'pillar of the state' and statistically this was

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excess of the quota was a penalty not exceeding £200. 'An Act to regulate the Immigration of Chinese and to make provision against their becoming a charge upon the Colony', *JQLC*. 30:2 (1881): 867-869.

<sup>194</sup> Douglas, 'The Electors of Bulimba', *Queensland Punch*, 1 June 1882.

<sup>195</sup> 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 14 June 1877.

substantiated.<sup>197</sup> In 1874, exports of rum and both raw and refined sugar amounted to £118,500, a figure that positioned sugar production as the third biggest export earner for Queensland, behind wool and minerals.<sup>198</sup> Sugar cane had developed into the most important economic crop in Queensland and its continued prosperity, it was repeatedly asserted, was dependant on a cheap coloured labour force. In the political arena the broader economic considerations were accorded more importance than narrower moral objections. Yet the enduring nature and intensity of the debate inside and outside of parliament fostered the development of particular features in Queensland's political culture. Two of note was the developing intersection between sugar interests and regionalism and second, the gradual refinement of the diverse and changeable political combinations into a more defined party-aligned motivation in political divisions.

In 1872 Anthony Trollope portrayed the expansion of sugar cultivation along the coast of the northern parts of the colony not yet occupied by white colonists as the 'coming golden era of sugar...destined to bless a region nearer to the sun'.<sup>199</sup> The ascendancy of the northern region of Queensland as the major centre for sugar cultivation is affirmed through a statistical portrait of Mackay. By 1875 Mackay had seventeen major mills in operation and almost 5000 acres of sugarcane under cultivation, one-third of Queensland's crop.<sup>200</sup> Incorporated in Mackay's pre-eminent rise as the 'Sugaropolis' of Queensland was its attainment by 1877 of the

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<sup>196</sup> M.M. Wilson, 'The Development of Party Politics in Queensland: 1859-1900', Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Queensland, 1938: 71.

<sup>197</sup> Sir Alfred Cowley's Cutting Book, Volume 2 cited in Don Dignan, 'Kanakan Political Struggle: An Analysis of the Attitude of Conflicting Groups to the Introduction, and Employment in Queensland, of South Sea Island Labour', Unpublished Manuscript MIC 482, Fryer Library, University of Queensland 45.

<sup>198</sup> Peter Griggs, 'Rust' Disease Outbreaks and Their Impact on the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1870-1880', *Agricultural History*, 89: 3 (Summer 1995): 413-37.

<sup>199</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand* cited in Christine Doran, 'North Queensland Separatism in the Nineteenth Century.' Unpublished PhD Thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1981: 94.

<sup>200</sup> Moore, *Kanaka*: 109; Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*: 74.

dubious distinction of being the largest importer of Melanesian labour, a situation that was maintained, except for one year, until 1884.<sup>201</sup> One distinct consequence of Mackay's advance was that it tied the district's prosperity with the maintenance of Melanesian labour. In the political wrestle over coloured labour, Liberal objections were increasingly seen as a distinctly southern opposition to northern interests. Initially lacking sufficient political representation, sugar planters aligned themselves with other conservative interests, particularly pastoralists, to contest any 'obstructions thrown in the way of their importation of coloured labour'.<sup>202</sup> This emergent regional antagonism between the north and south matured into a strident cry for northern separation by the mid-1880s, with the Mackay planters adopting a prominent but controversial protagonist role. The essential irritant in this ongoing discord was the Liberals' active censure of the development of large-scale rural capitalism as the basic economic and social system for the young colony.

Disagreement over contrasting attitudes towards land use and settlement had been an important and persistent feature of Queensland since its inception as a self-governing colony. In the initial period of development this apparent division was not a distinct Liberal urban/agrarian *versus* conservative squatter dispute. Neither group was, in any sense, a homogeneous collective rather an assembly of factions often splintered by the strength of regionalism. The crystallisation of two broad political movements, Liberal and Conservative, was initiated in the 1870s debates over coloured labour. In objecting to the continued abuses and the societal fears connected with the labour trade and the associated strengthening of

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<sup>201</sup> Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*: 78.



the squatter/planter's economic and political hegemony, a well-organised and allied opposition emerged. With 'Anti-Black Labour' as its political battle cry, this essentially Liberal-led alliance gained momentum and began to challenge the political influence of the pastoral/sugar collective and their sponsorship of large-scale rural capitalism.<sup>203</sup> Further assistance to this Liberal assault was provided in the provisions of the 1872 *Elections Act* and the 1878 *Electoral Districts Act*.<sup>204</sup> Through the additional representation and the redistribution of electorates enacted under these Acts, the numeric dominance of the squatter/planter block in the legislature was eroded through the introduction of new members into parliament, largely representing urban constituencies, the wellspring of Liberal support. The emergent Liberal leader, Samuel Walker Griffith consequently viewed the divisions taken in parliament in 1878 as reflecting the existence of political parties in Queensland, one, a popular party and the other based on property ownership and wealth.<sup>205</sup> Conditions were not yet favourable for solid and continuous political associations, yet in the bitterness engendered in the coloured labour question, a transient though coherent political strategy had been presented and these affiliations indicated the future basis of political divisions. The more permanent and characteristic political groups of Liberal and Conservative became more distinguishable in the 1880s and 1890s in response to revenue problems, fiscal accord and the coloured labour question. The delineation of the political groupings in Queensland did extend the longevity of each government but did not introduce a semblance of 'political peace'. Rather it deepened old divisions and more intensely

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<sup>202</sup> Mackay gained direct parliamentary representation in 1878. *Times*, 12 October 1885 cited in Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*: 183; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 289-90.

<sup>203</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 66.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid*: 286-290.

<sup>205</sup> Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 46.

focused public attention on internal matters.<sup>206</sup> A state of affairs that proved obstructive to the development of the broader ideal of political federation.

In the newly formed colony of Queensland in 1859 the granting of a bicameral legislature was widely lauded as an 'exceedingly auspicious' commencement to the colony's career.<sup>207</sup> Further, the Queensland government claimed during its half-centenary celebrations that it was an 'emphatic expression of confidence in the self-governing competence of the people of North-eastern Australia'.<sup>208</sup> Yet in the new colony's practical application of self-government numerous factors emerge that arguably detract from such accolades. The political route taken by Queensland was heavily influenced by the lateness of its establishment, the non-existence of any tradition of government, the ramifications and resentment of years of neglect by the Sydney-based administration and the pre-existent hegemony of pastoral interests throughout its territory. The political culture that evolved under these influences was one rigidly bent towards aggressive progress for the rapid attainment of 'abundant prosperity'.<sup>209</sup> Under this mantra the Queensland parliament initiated a regime of large-scale development financed through a heavy dependency on loans. The divergent views on how the colony should be advanced and a virulent form of regionalism coloured the pragmatic realisation of this development.

Eager to lay Queensland's economic foundations at an accelerated pace, the new parliament employed its principal asset, the land, to foster the expansion of the

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<sup>206</sup> 'Another Anniversary', *Week*, 15 December 1883.

<sup>207</sup> *Moreton Bay Courier*, 5 November 1859.

<sup>208</sup> Queensland Government, *Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress*. Brisbane: Anthony J. Cummings, Government Printer, 1909:1.

colony's only productive industry, pastoralism. The pace and force of this phase of pastoral expansion was disastrous for the colony's Indigenous population. The 'unparalleled' use of force in Queensland would result, the *Sydney Morning Herald* decried in 1875, in Queensland having 'a heavy debt to pay for its treatment of aboriginals' and this would decisively come into play in Queensland's 1883 attempted annexation of New Guinea.<sup>210</sup>

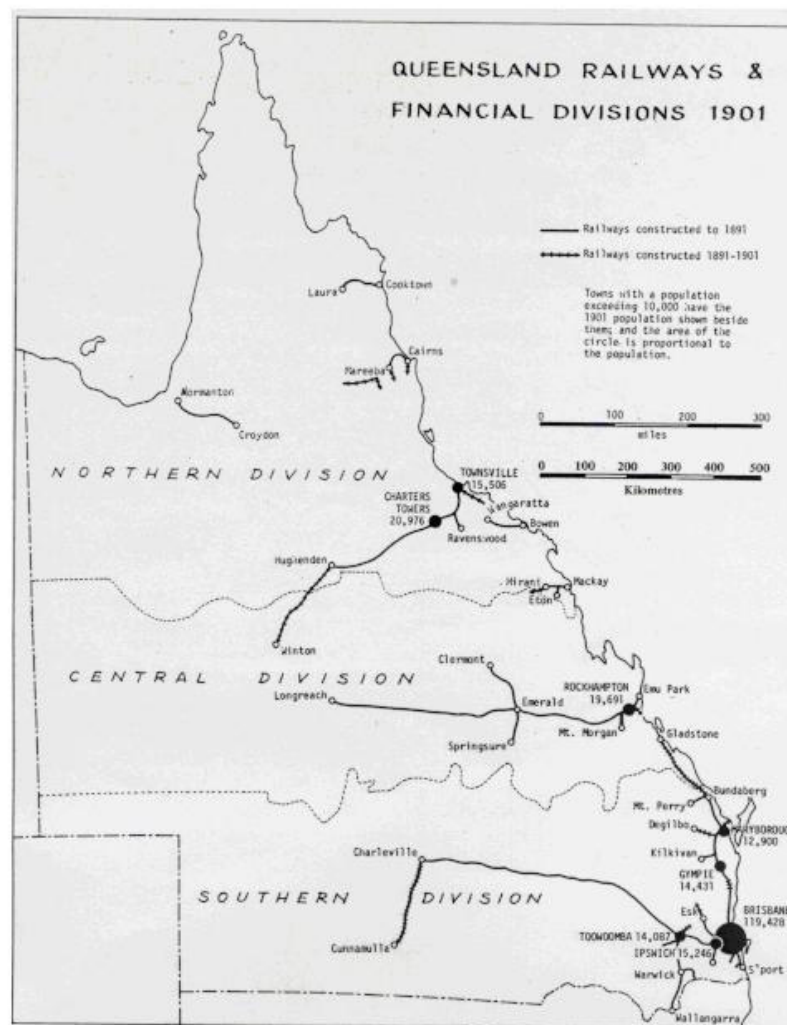
The new Queensland government's economically expedient patronage of the pastoralists' zeal to maximise profits exacerbated the decentralised pattern of settlement inaugurated in the 1840s and 1850s expansion of pastoralism into the Moreton Bay District. The resultant scattered nature of settlement, at a time when the means for internal communication other than coastal shipping was almost non-existent, entrenched the primacy of local or regional affiliations. Regional loyalty instituted a political mentality that prioritised the independence of individual members within parliament in their intense pursuit of government-financed public works. The resultant parliamentary system was one organised around a pattern of constantly changing factions rather than stable political parties. The active involvement of this regional factionalism was particularly pronounced in the government's principal developmental project, railway construction, and effected the establishment of the most decentralised rail system of the Australian colonies and further strengthened economic and political regionalism within Queensland.

The establishment of a substantial population base or more particularly an adequate supply of labour was an integral adjunct to the rapid access to

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<sup>209</sup> *Moreton Bay Courier*, 5 November 1859.

Queensland's vast resources provided through rail construction. Large-scale immigration programs were geared towards the supply of this labour, as it was believed that labour was 'all we want to be the most prosperous colony in the world'.<sup>211</sup>



**Figure 1.1: Queensland's decentralised rail system.**<sup>212</sup>

Yet, despite the numeric success, evident through the number of new colonists that arrived and the expense incurred, there continued to develop a demand for an alternative source of labour. Encouragement of two potentially profitable and

<sup>210</sup> Lang, *The Aborigines of Australia*: 46; *Sydney Morning Herald* cited in 'Alleged Outrages Committed on the Aborigines in Queensland by the Native Mounted Police, *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*. 1 (1875): 2.

<sup>211</sup> Patrick Leslie, pastoralist and prominent early settler cited in Cronin, "From Plodding 'Paddy' to 'The Ching-Chong Chinaman'": 237.

<sup>212</sup> Ronald Lawson, *Brisbane in the 1890s: A Study of an Australian Urban Society*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1973.

labour intensive agricultural pursuits, initially cotton and then more substantially sugar created an unremitting need for a ready and cheap labour force. To fulfil this need, labour was privately imported from the South Sea Islands, as a temporary labour aid. Installed however was a contentious forty-year dependence on coloured labour. The Queensland government's defiant maintenance of this servile coloured labour force, against the loud rebuke of external and internal authorities and communities, was the clearest expression of the colony's persistent devoutness to economically expedient outcomes. What had consequently unfolded in the practical exercise of self-government in Queensland since separation, was critiqued by William Coote:

We have had twenty-one years of mimicry of politics, and of reality of class and personal interests and strife; we have the dignity of a public debt equal to that of some sovereign states of almost secondary eminence, - larger in proportion to our numbers than that of our own neighbours....One thing the colony has been a *long time discovering* – the value of self-dependence – the other, which it has yet to learn, is the *adjustment of ends to means*.<sup>213</sup>

The characteristic feature then of this early period of self-government was the existence and adherence to a particularly strident developmental regime in which the argument of economic expediency transcended broader social considerations. The success and momentum with which this crude policy of aggressive progress was implemented ensured its maintenance by consecutive parliaments as Queensland strove to redress a delayed start and to consolidate its wealth. The survival and diligence of Queensland's entrepreneurial pattern of power and influence, provoked Coote to warn 'that there is no country whose future may be more marred by the greed of classes, or of individuals, who cloak an insatiable avarice of power or wealth beneath ample folds of an ostensible patriotism.'<sup>214</sup>

The dynamics of the Queensland situation instituted certain individualistic policies and qualities, which would have an enduring and often turbulent impact on the colony's local political environment. The intersection of Queensland's individualistic undercurrents and the emergent subject of federation would fashion a distinctive quality to the colony's participation in the political movement towards the union of the Australian colonies. The emergent traits of particular note were a narrow and self-interested focus on internal development, the contribution of regionalism and its offshoot separatism and the employment of a highly unfree coloured labour force. The interesting properties of these Queensland issues was that they functioned both as an oppositional force to the development of the federal idea in Queensland, essentially obstructing local interest in the movement while conversely they later contributed to the mobilisation of the federal movement by furnishing an imperative and practical objective for federal action. Yet, the manifest interest of the new colony on its own internal development differed little in intensity to the provincial focus of the other Australian colonies at their corresponding stage of development. The distinguishing aspect of Queensland was that this phase of early development occurred twenty to thirty years after that of the other principal southern colonies.<sup>215</sup> This difference between Queensland's developmental time-line and that of the other more established colonies was that it set Queensland's vision of national progress on a narrower provincial framework in contrast to the developing broader national Australian idea of progress canvassed in the emerging concept of political federation.

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<sup>213</sup> Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*: xi, 255. Emphasis added.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*: xiii.

<sup>215</sup> Queensland's earlier stage of development was relative to that of the southern colonies on the east coast. On the west coast the Swan River Colony, as Western Australia was initially known, though established in 1829 had made but slow progress and remained at an early stage of development and did not attain self-government until 1891. Attitudinal parallels between Queensland and Western Australia would present as an interesting comparative study.

## Chapter 2

### The Federal Movement and Provincialism.

#### 1840s – 1880s

Writing in the *Melbourne Review* in October 1879, Sir Henry Parkes<sup>1</sup>, Premier of New South Wales and prominent federal advocate, lamented that despite repeated and often eloquent and powerful arguments for the political federation of the six Australian colonies, no real progress had been achieved; ‘no two twigs have been put together towards the bundle of sticks. No single venture has been made in the trial of federal strength.’<sup>2</sup> Parkes attributed the ‘stationary position’ of the federal cause to the ‘intangibility’ of the aims of federation, and a ‘narrowness of view, and that reluctance to surrender authority’.<sup>3</sup> The absence of a ‘complete and convincing exposition of the advantages’ of federation, Parkes argued, had facilitated the continual rejection of the federal proposal, by each colonial parliament. This was based on the colonies’ concern that the removal of the ‘grander subjects’ from their own legislative control would significantly restrict their ‘fields of ambition and diminish their importance.’<sup>4</sup> To initiate change, and in ‘respect’ to the federal cause, Parkes submitted a scheme of federation not ‘on the old lines of projection’.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Testimony to Sir Henry Parkes’ (1815-1896) significant public role in the federation movement was his receipt, posthumously, of the title of ‘Father of Federation’, for his federal work primarily during the late 1880s and 1890s and in particular his role in initiating and leading the 1890 Federal Conference. Refer to Biographical Appendix. A.W. Martin, ‘Sir Henry Parkes’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 5 (1851- 1890): 399-406.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Parkes, ‘An Australian Nation,’ *Melbourne Review*, 4: 16 (October 1879): 325-33.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*: 326.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*.

The objective of this chapter is twofold: first to explore the issues Parkes raised in 1879 as a means to review the earlier proposals for an Australian federation, in particular the principal obstacles the movement confronted. This 'early' history of the federal movement rarely occupies any significant space in the historical account of the 'nativity' of the Australian Commonwealth.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, a contributive factor to this was the lack of any real practical success or, as the contemporary federalist Sir Charles Gavan Duffy floridly phrased it 'the flowers gathered from so much seed made but a scanty bouquet.'<sup>7</sup> Yet, a summary appraisal of these earlier attempts to advocate the federal model not only establishes the longevity of the federal movement but also identifies and presents the initial workings of a key dynamic; the enduring and formidable impact that the Australian process of colonial settlement and development had on the federal idea. To illustrate this dynamic the second section will examine the key aspects of Queensland's development that resulted in Queensland being excluded from Parkes' 1879 federal proposal. Incongruously, it was these same questions of climatic and policy difference that contributed to Queensland's decisive 1883 attempted annexation of New Guinea, which was heralded as the catalyst for the later federation movement.

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<sup>6</sup> A recurrent feature of the major speeches on federation was a preamble that reviewed the movement's early history. This practice endeavoured to bestow an historical authenticity on the movement. This feature was not generally incorporated into the principal historical accounts of the movement. Arguably this was because the principal writers of these texts were participants in what is called the Later Federation Movement and second that the record of this formative phase of the federal movement was essentially devoid of any real practical success. The conventional accounts of federation tend to concentrate on the latter stages initiated by Parkes 1889 Tenterfield Address. An alternative focus occasionally features the events that followed Queensland's 1883 annexation of New Guinea which led to the establishment of the Federal Council. John A. Cockburn, *Australian Federation*. London: Marshall, 1901: 27; Nauze, *The Making of the Australian Constitution*. 2; Jeff Brownrigg, 'An Early Proposal for a Federal Constitution: William Smith O'Brien, Launceston, 1853,' *New Federalist*, 4 (December 1999): 84-89.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Charles Gavan Duffy (1816-1903) Irish nationalist, Victorian statesman and federalist emigrated from Great Britain at the end of 1855. Refer to Biographical Appendix. Sir Charles Gavan Duffy to Sir Henry Parkes, 13 October 1891, Volume 51, (A921), 'Sir Henry Parkes Correspondence', 135-38; Joy E. Parnaby, 'Sir Charles Gavan Duffy', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 4 (1851-1890): 109-13.



Parkes conceded, in 1879, that the complete federation of the Australian colonies had 'little prospect of early consummation' and for that reason advocated the immediate union of three of the colonies into the 'United Provinces of British Australia'.<sup>8</sup> The basis for his selection of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia was their geographical proximity, the comparable nature of their key interests, and 'their equality of promise in their future capabilities'.<sup>9</sup> The advantages of this partial union, Parkes postulated, would be the 'strengthening of their institutions of government, economizing their revenues, and consolidating their power...[and] giving them a new destiny'.<sup>10</sup> More practically, the union would eradicate the jealousy or rivalry entailed in the construction of railways and confer a more efficient civil service and system of defence against invasion.<sup>11</sup> The abstract nature of these objectives and the absence of any discussion on the process by which this union was to be achieved, exposed Parkes to criticism along the same lines as he himself had identified, that the aims of his plan were 'not sufficiently tangible'.<sup>12</sup> The generality of the terms used to expound the federal ideal was a perceptible feature of the earlier campaigns.

Federation, it was argued, would assuredly provide 'the future grandeur and...the inevitable magnitude of an Australian Dominion'.<sup>13</sup> The idealistic vision of the associated prosperity and security reportedly made 'young Australian nationalists stroke their beards with a sense of expanding power'.<sup>14</sup> While these 'nationalists' were clearly enlivened to the potentialities, their numeric support was insufficient

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<sup>8</sup> Parkes, 'An Australian Nation': 330, 333.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*: 327.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*: 327.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*: 327-328.

<sup>12</sup> John Douglas, 'An Australian Nation,' *Melbourne Review*, 4: 17 (January 1880): 1-14.

<sup>13</sup> Vincent Cavendish, 'An Australian Dominion,' *Victorian Review*, 1: 3 (January 1880): 384-91.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas, 'An Australian Nation': 6.

to propel the federal cause from prophesy towards a practical political strategy. Tactically, the aim of the repeated advocacy of the federal goal on chiefly idealistic terms was to 'warm the coldest imagination into fervour, to kindle the most brilliant hopes', or, as Parkes indirectly claimed, they were 'preparing the ground'.<sup>15</sup> The inherent paradox in this approach was that while these advocates endeavoured to generate enthusiasm to propel the cause from the realms of idealism to practical consultation, they were charged with not providing what they had hoped to set in motion, the collaborative development of practical federal outcomes. The federal idea was consequently dispatched by the majority of pragmatic colonial politicians, as premature or fantasy, for it was a question that 'they were partly unable, partly unwilling, to grasp'.<sup>16</sup> A secondary, though interconnected indictment was that the elevation of the ideal failed to account for the existent conditions of the Australian situation. Vincent Cavendish critically asserted in his 1880 article 'An Australian Dominion', that 'by the action of a vivid imagination', Sir Henry Parkes, Sir Hercules Robinson,<sup>17</sup> Sir Charles G. Duffy and 'other eminent men' had been 'rendered indifferent' to the obstacles which impeded a federal union.<sup>18</sup> Parkes' 1879 judgment that the 'real cause of failure, so far' was the absence of a complete or convincing account of federation's real advantages, seemingly

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<sup>15</sup> John Douglas asserted that 'a good sentimental perception of the future Australian nation will go a long way towards assisting us to overcome the obstacles which stand in the way of it.' Cavendish, 'An Australian Dominion', 386; Henry Parkes, 'Intercolonial Agreement,' *Victorian Review*, 3: 1 (January 1881): 377-81; Douglas, 'An Australian Nation': 13.

<sup>16</sup> 'The Essayist', 'The Federation of Australia. No.1', *Queenslander*, 9 January 1875.

<sup>17</sup> Sir Hercules Robinson (1824-1897) Governor of New South Wales from 1872 – 1878. Robinson towards the end of his governorship demonstrated a 'sort of amateur interest' in the subject of federation. Bede Nevins, 'Sir Hercules George Robert Robinson', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 6 (1851-1890): 48-50.

<sup>18</sup> Though renown for his rhetorical advocacy of federation Cavendish's censure of Parkes being indifferent to the obstacles is not completely justified. 'The Essayist', wrote of Parkes in 1875 that 'whilst a firm stickler for the rights of his colony, he does not appear blind to the great problems that lies before him and every other Australian Premier. He appears to have a larger outlook than any of his predecessors....But ...seems as much afraid of grappling with the question of federation as any of his contemporaries.' Cavendish, 'An Australian Dominion', 385; 'The Essayist', 'The Federation of Australia. No.1', *Queenslander*, 9 January 1875; Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*. 385.

positioned a secondary concern above more fundamental impediments.<sup>19</sup> In an 1881 article, Parkes more fully expressed the internal dynamics of the situation:

The critics will discuss the abstract question of a federal policy....But the moment that any attempt is made to try these doctrines by the test of practical application, the grand federal object is submerged under a flood of local objections and sectional interests.<sup>20</sup>

The formidable barrier to the propagation of the federal idea was not the lack of convincing advantages but more directly linked to each colony's stalwart identification as a separate or independent entity within the geographical landmass of Australia.<sup>21</sup> The formative process by which the Australian colonies were settled was the defining force in the development of these independent colonial identities that factored so decisively in determining the momentum and direction of the federal initiative.

The division of the continent into six distinct territorial units was a progressive process activated by the interplay of geography and economics, to which responsible government later added political potency. Despite the variants of time and circumstance<sup>22</sup> that shaped the foundation of each of Australia's principal settlements, the response of the colonies to the pressures caused by the geographical distances between them was relatively uniform. In an environment

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<sup>19</sup> Parkes, 'An Australian Nation': 326.

<sup>20</sup> Parkes, 'Intercolonial Agreement': 378-379.

<sup>21</sup> Tasmania though separate from the mainland was included in the original territorial limits of New South Wales. Under the commission of 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1787 Captain Arthur Phillip was appointed the first Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief, in and over the territory called New South Wales which extended over the whole eastern half of the continent from Cape York in the north to the southernmost point of what became known as Van Diemen's Land and west as far as the 135<sup>th</sup> degree of east longitude. 'Governor Phillip's Second Commission, 2 April 1787', F.M. Bladen, (ed.), *Historical Records of New South Wales*. 1: 2, Phillip, 1783-1792. Sydney: Government Printer, 1892: 61-67.

<sup>22</sup> Following the foundation of New South Wales as a penal colony at Sydney in 1788, penal settlements as part of New South Wales were established at Hobart Town in 1804 and Moreton Bay in 1824; free settlements as part of New South Wales at Port Phillip in 1835; settlements as part of a separate colony at Swan River, Western Australia in 1829 and St Vincent's Gulf, South Australia in 1836. Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*. Sydney: 1901 Edition Reprinted by Legal Books, 1995: 79; Glen Rhodes, 'The Australian Federation Referenda 1898-1900: A Spatial Analysis of Voting Behaviour', Unpublished PhD Thesis, London School of Economic and Political Science, 1988:133.

devoid of the infrastructure required for mass communication and rapid transport,<sup>23</sup> each settlement was effectively alienated from the other, and as a result, this placed inordinate value upon physical proximity. The regional cohesion that this engendered was further enhanced by materialism, which inspired an accordant and untiring quest for economic prosperity. Isolated and immersed in the economic development of their respective territories, each cultivated their own discrete requirements and interests.<sup>24</sup> The inevitable derivative of this separateness of development on a concentrated regional basis was provincialism.<sup>25</sup> The resulting configuration of widely scattered settlements with introverted provincial aspirations established and reinforced isolationism as a governing directive. This isolationist agenda underpinned the relationships between the bounded communities and effected a significant reduction in New South Wales' original territorial limits.<sup>26</sup>

It was repeatedly argued, on the eastern half of the continent, that Sydney's administration of New South Wales' vast colonial territory was the most significant impediment to each settlement's progress.<sup>27</sup> Economic matters factored as the key

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<sup>23</sup> Telegraphic communications between Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney were not established until 1858 and the construction of a rail connection between Sydney and Melbourne was not completed until mid-1883, Sydney and Brisbane 1889 and Adelaide and Melbourne 1887. Through traffic between the major centres of population was almost exclusively via sea routes. The coastal location of Australia's principal cities was the collaborative result of the primacy of sea transport and the economic and communal necessity for access to it, in conjunction with the geographical factor that Australia's most arable land lay near the coast. K.T. Livingston, *The Wired Nation Continent: The Communication Revolution and Federating Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996: 44; F.J. Mines, 'The Integration of The Australasian Colonies, 1860-1890', Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Queensland, 1968: 19; W.G. McMinn, *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994: 26-29; Victor S. Clark, 'Australian Economic Problems. 1. The Railways,' *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 22: 3 (May 1908): 399-451.

<sup>24</sup> Sir Charles Nicholson (1808 – 1903) President of Queensland's first Legislative Council, argued in 1881 that a contributive factor to this pattern of development was the inertia of 'Downing-street' in the colonisation process, who 'for the most part [had] been passive, perhaps too much so.' Nicholson in part qualified this statement by arguing that it was 'doubtful' whether the 'energetic men' of the new colonies would have 'submitted to any active interference in their enterprise'. Sir Charles Nicholson, 'The Principles Which Ought to Regulate the Determination of the Political and Municipal Boundaries and Divisions of the Colonies,' *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, 12 (May 1881): 311-42.

<sup>25</sup> 'Colonialism' and 'colonial patriotism' are interchangeable terms for 'provincialism'.

<sup>26</sup> Refer to footnote 21.

<sup>27</sup> Not all the settlements passed through the separatist fight to attain territorial autonomy; the Swan River settlement in Western Australia was from its foundation a separate colony and the enormous geographical divide between the settlement and the major population centres on the eastern half of the continent effectively

irritant in these interactions between Sydney and the various settlements within the colony of New South Wales. The subordinate ranking of these settlements to Sydney, confirmed by the unjust allocation of the colony's revenue, was increasingly challenged as each developed on provincial lines and saw themselves 'not as satellites of Sydney but as economic rivals'.<sup>28</sup> The centrifugal influence of provincialism and the important precedent established by the separation of Van Diemen's Land in 1825 activated the bitter process of the territorial dismemberment of New South Wales 'by her vigorous offspring'.<sup>29</sup> Throughout the 1840s and 1850s successive agitations 'to obtain the local expenditure of the local revenue and the local management of local affairs' resulted in the territorial separation of the Port Phillip and Moreton Bay Districts from New South Wales, to create the independent colonies of Victoria and Queensland.<sup>30</sup> The intensity of the 'ill-feeling' generated in the course of this continental subdivision and colonial re-definition served to accentuate the force of separatism and consequently 'proved a serious evil' in the relations between the colonies.<sup>31</sup>

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maintained its independence. South Australia's partition from the original territorial boundaries of New South Wales 1836 was affected by an 1834 Act of the British Parliament. The implementation in South Australia of Edward Gibbon Wakefield's theory of 'systematic colonisation', on an agricultural basis, marked out the Province's pursuit and maintenance of an independent political course from the beginning. A symbolic projection of the settlement's sense of difference and superiority was its official selection of the title 'Province' in opposition to 'Colony'. McMinn, *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia*, 30-31; J.C. Bannon, 'South Australia', Irving, (ed.), *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*: 130-85; Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 63-64. Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*: 9-10, 16-31; B.A. Knox, 'Moreton Bay Separation: A Problem of Imperial Government, 1825-1856.' *Historical Studies*, 14:56 (1971): 561-578.

<sup>28</sup> Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*: 19-30; McMinn, *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia*: 30-31.

<sup>29</sup> Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*: 10.

<sup>30</sup> Howard Willoughby, *Australian Federation: Its Aims and Possibilities*. Melbourne: Sandy & McDougall, 1891: 12.

<sup>31</sup> The destructive force of this animosity was recognised by the Colonial Office. In the case of Moreton Bay it was put forward as a reason to grant separation so as to prevent the growth of 'ill-feeling between the North and Sydney, as pernicious as that which was allowed to grow up...between Sydney and Melbourne.' Herman Merivale, Permanent Under-Secretary, Colonial Office Minute, 2 October 1855, CO 201/486 cited in B.A. Knox, 'Moreton Bay Separation': 574.

Within the redefined colonial boundaries, political autonomy and separateness of development emerged as the twin obsessions. It was therefore recognised, as the contemporary historian William Hearn wrote, that if the colonies were to attain the full extent of the power and functions associated with colonial autonomy this would require 'that great change to our colonial system which is known as the introduction of Responsible Government'.<sup>32</sup> During 1853 and 1854 the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Van Diemen's Land individually petitioned the Imperial government for the establishment of bicameral legislatures.<sup>33</sup> The accompanying draft constitutions were judged by the British crown law officer, Sir Frederic Rogers, as amounting to 'little less than a Legislative Declaration of Independence on the part of the Australian colonies....you cannot please the colonists with anything short of absolute independence'.<sup>34</sup> This resolute spirit of independence was fortified by the grant of responsible government.

'Placed under distinct and altogether independent legislatures' each colony politically and economically demonstrated their intent to maintain an autonomous

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<sup>32</sup> William Edward Hearn (1826-1888) Political Economist, First Professor of Modern History, Literature, Political Economy and Logic at the University of Melbourne University appointed in 1854. Refer to Bibliographical Appendix. Under the auspices of *Act for the Better Government of Her Majesty's Australian Colonies* of 1850 the Port Phillip District was granted separation and the form of government established in New South Wales in 1842. This Act also extended the form of New South Wales Constitution to South Australia and Van Diemen's Land. The distribution of seats in New South Wales' Legislative Council, between nominee and elected representatives, was not altered. William Hearn cited in Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 44; J.A. La Nauze, 'William Edward Hearn,' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 4 (1851-1890): 370-72; A.C.V. Melbourne, *Early Constitutional Development In Australia: New South Wales 1788-1856. Queensland 1859-1922*. Edited and introduced by R.B. Joyce. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1963: 376-78.

<sup>33</sup> New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Van Diemen's Land pursued, under the powers conferred by the 1850 Act, the establishment of bicameral legislatures to achieve responsible government. Throughout 1856 each of these colonies Constitution Acts was assented to and proclaimed. The Constitution granted to Queensland in 1859 provided similar powers and functions as those of the other colonies. In contrast Western Australia was not granted a Legislative Council with nominated and elected members until 1870. In 1874 the Secretary of State decided that 'the colony was not ready for the change' to responsible government. Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 39-47, 54-55, 60-61, 63-65, 68-70; Melbourne, *Early Constitutional Development In Australia*: 427-432.

<sup>34</sup> F. Rogers to R. W. Church, 23 September 1854 cited in Melbourne, *Early Constitutional Development In Australia*: 419-420.

existence.<sup>35</sup> Each exerted their absolute authority through the implementation of policies for internal development, framed solely in accordance with their own immediate interests, and informed by the overriding objective of 'dignifying our own particular little province by depreciating our neighbours'.<sup>36</sup> Legislative differences in respect to fiscal policies, postal arrangements, defence, gold and land regulations were consequently enacted and served to 'widen existing severances'.<sup>37</sup> Whilst provincialism was the stimulus for this policy of independent action, the tenacity with which it was enforced reflected the intensified state of rivalry, jealousy and antagonism that existed between the colonies. The historian Cephas Allin depicted the colonies attitude of suspicious wariness as such:

They were in the habit of constantly analysing the motives and intentions of the sister colonies, and oftentimes discovered, through a faculty of splenetic psychology, mysterious and dangerous designs in the simple proposals of their neighbours. They were supersensitive of their weakness and of their local autonomy....They each and all had their special grievances against one another....they approached intercolonial questions from the standpoint of provincial hucksters anxious to drive a good bargain at the expense of a sister colony....The whole tendency was to develop the spirit of a narrow localism which masqueraded around under the guise of patriotism....As a result of the adoption of this narrow-minded policy, the interests of the colonies tended to diverge further and further apart, and to be oftentimes treated as antagonistic....The policy of provincialism was everywhere triumphant.<sup>38</sup>

In the decades after the 1850s, with each colony transfixed on the development of their respective territories, colonial individualism and independence was pushed to its utmost effect. The 'systematic treatment of each colony by its neighbours, as though it were a foreign state', the South Australian Colonial Secretary, E.G. Waterhouse pointed out in 1862, 'may eventually render impossible that federation

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<sup>35</sup> Quote cited in Cephas Daniel Allin, *A History of the Tariff Relations of the Australian Colonies*. Minneapolis: Bulletin of the University of Minnesota, 1918: 17; T.H. Irving, '1850-1870,' F. K. Crowley, (ed.) *A New History of Australia*. Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1976: 124-64.

<sup>36</sup> Henry G. Turner, 'Advance Australia,' *Melbourne Review*, 7: 26 (April 1882): 160-68.

<sup>37</sup> Quote from 'Legislative Council Resolution', 17 July 1860, *SAPD*, 1 (1860) cited in Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*: 392, 410-11.

<sup>38</sup> Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*: 411-12.

which all look forward to as ultimately desirable.'<sup>39</sup> This entrenched model of separatism constituted in practice a series of obstacles to the federal cause.

Colonial indifference to the utility of federation was a subtle though most effective force in preventing any joint consideration of the federal question. Prior to the separation of Victoria and the colonies' attainment of responsible government, Imperial statesmen, led by the Secretary of State for the Colonies Earl Grey, advocated the advantages of a central legislative authority. The 'General Assembly' would enable 'the various legislatures of the several Australian colonies to co-operate with each other in the enactment of such laws as may be necessary for regulating the interests common to those possessions collectively'.<sup>40</sup> The merits of such a scheme were beyond each colony's sole objective of securing the authority to manage their own affairs. Colonial disinterest and criticism in this first step in the process of federal consideration led the Imperial government to conclude that the federal initiative must in future emanate, in concurrence, from the Australian colonies themselves.<sup>41</sup> After the attainment of self-government the Australian proponents of federation took up the Imperial submission on colonial federation. Thus an 1857 Victorian Select Committee called for an intercolonial conference on the federal question based on their conviction that it was 'not too soon to invite a mutual understanding on the subject' and that 'a negotiation demanding so much caution and forbearance, so much foresight and experience,

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<sup>39</sup> Quote cited in Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*: 398.

<sup>40</sup> Earl Grey's Despatch, 31 July 1847 cited in Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 81; Brian de Garis, 'Britain and the Australian Federation Movement,' *New Federalist*, 7 (June 2001): 8-15.

<sup>41</sup> The withdrawal of the Imperial government's active role in promoting the federal idea was illustrated in the fact that no papers on the subject of Australian federation were printed for the British parliament between 1857 and the establishment of the Federal Council of Australasia in 1884-85. Quick and Garran asserted that the inaction of the Imperial government was justified by the lack of interest shown by the colonies. Bruce A. Knox, 'The Rise Of Colonial Federation as an Object of British Policy, 1850-1870,' *Journal of British Studies*, 11: 1



must originate in the mutual action of the colonies'.<sup>42</sup> In stark contrast to this perception of the matter were the attitudes of the majority of colonial politicians.

The protracted negotiations between the various colonial legislatures, which occupied five years, failed to cement a concurrence of opinion on the necessity for an intercolonial conference on federation.<sup>43</sup> The 'fatal impediment to action', Sir Charles Duffy concluded, was the obstructive influence of the New South Wales legislative assembly.<sup>44</sup> Duffy isolated in particular the attitude of the New South Wales Colonial Secretary, Charles Cowper,<sup>45</sup> who believed that the time was not right 'for bringing forward such a question, or at all events that there was more urgent business to be dealt with by the legislature of New South Wales.'<sup>46</sup> This stance was not peculiar to New South Wales and similar preoccupations emerged from the other colonies and ultimately contributed to the collapse of the negotiations for a conference on the federal proposal.<sup>47</sup> Responsible government was too new and the colonial administrations too pre-occupied with the business of domestic politics to cultivate popular and parliamentary interest in the federal question. In Queensland, Arthur Macalister, Member for Ipswich, argued in 1870

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(November 1971): 92-112; Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 100.

<sup>42</sup> 'Report of the Victorian Select Committee 'upon the necessity of a federal union of the Australasian colonies for legislative purposes, and the best means of accomplishing such an union if necessary'', September 1857 cited in Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 95-96.

<sup>43</sup> No conference on the federal idea eventuated from this proposal. A final attempt was made in 1863 to place 'the question of federal union of the Australian colonies' on the agenda of the Intercolonial Conference on uniform tariffs held in Melbourne. The official record of the proceedings reported that the subject was not considered as the 'delegates had no instructions in the matter, and it did not seem probable that its discussion at present would be attended with any benefit.' Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*: 408; Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 92-100; McMinn, *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia*: 77-78.

<sup>44</sup> Quote cited in Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*: 374.

<sup>45</sup> Sir Charles Cowper (1807-1875) Pastoralist, New South Wales MLA and Premier. Refer to Biographical Appendix. John M. Ward, 'Sir Charles Cowper', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. 3 (1969): 474-479; McMinn, *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia*: 65.

<sup>46</sup> Quote cited in Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*: 373.

<sup>47</sup> New South Wales' indifference to the federal matter would certainly have had a degenerative effect on the negotiations, for it would have discouraged the decisive action of the other colonies on the basis that it would have been inadvisable and ineffective to hold an intercolonial conference without the Mother colony. *Ibid*.

that the 'parties here fail to discover what Federation, at present, would effect for this colony.'<sup>48</sup> Macalister additionally raised the logistical problem entailed in sending representatives to the hypothesised Federal parliament, for in Queensland:

the greatest difficulty now exists in obtaining representatives to the Queensland Parliament for the distant districts of the colony, and I fear that to obtain representatives required to attend probably one thousand miles still further away, would with our limited population, be an impossibility.<sup>49</sup>

The primacy of domestic considerations remained a significant obstacle to the promotion of the federal ideal, for it precluded the development of a broader or national view on intercolonial questions. 'The Essayist', in the first of a series of articles published in the *Queenslander* in 1875, entitled 'The Federation of Australia', criticised the 'petty spirit of provincialism', which persistently rendered the interests of the single parts over the whole:

Absorbed by local matters, occupied with questions of no more than provincial interest, essential yet not supreme, the Australian colonies appear to have no time to spare for the consideration of those subjects of weightier import which tower a head and shoulders above minor themes....things of national importance, intimately connected with the future of Australia, are allowed to pass without notice.<sup>50</sup>

A further factor in the colonies' lack of enthusiasm on the federal question was their inherent fear of any 'outside' encroachment on the individual rights of their local legislatures. Queensland's Executive Council, at the commencement of its independent colonial career in 1860, 'entertained serious doubts' on the question of federal union, for they:

perceived obstacles of a serious character to any project which might by the creation of a central authority, tend to limit the complete independence of the scattered communities peopling this continent one of the other.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Hon. Arthur Macalister, 20 November 1870, *QPD*, 10 (1870): 225-227.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> 'The Essayist', 'The Federation of Australia. No.1', *Queenslander*, 9 January 1875.

<sup>51</sup> Executive Council Minute, 25 June 1860, 'Executive Council Minutes', PRV8112/1/1, QSA.

Parkes astutely attempted to accommodate the colonies' intrinsic defence of their political individualism, in his 1879 proposed scheme for a partial federation. To counter the colonies' fear that federation would remove the 'grander subjects' from their legislative control and thus restrict their 'fields of ambition and diminish their importance', Parkes argued that an Australian nation 'might start into existence' without 'altering the familiar proportions of our system of government'.<sup>52</sup> His proposal, he stressed, would:

instead of sinking the character of parliament by withdrawing from its hands the more ennobling work of statesmanship, would disencumber it of the irksome weight of municipal labours, and free it from the impediments to a higher and more glorious political life.<sup>53</sup>

In Parkes' tactical attempt to defuse suspicion of any outside political infringement he in effect verified the extent of the colonies 'narrowness of view, and that reluctance to surrender authority'.<sup>54</sup>

Reservations existed over the sincerity or soundness of Parkes' advocacy of a federal compact between New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.<sup>55</sup> His article did however present an authoritative insight into the opposing forces

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<sup>52</sup> Parkes, 'An Australian Nation': 326-327.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*: 327.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*: 326.

<sup>55</sup> In view of Parkes' political experience in the New South Wales legislature and his position as Premier at the time the article was written he would have been fully versed on the open hostility between New South Wales and Victoria and the exclusivist tendencies of South Australia, which would have presented a serious challenge to the merger. John Douglas in reply to Parkes' article argued that the questions raised by Parkes were 'scarcely likely to be practically dealt with at present by any of the Australian Legislatures.' Douglas further asserted that it was 'of no use to hold up the *simulacrum* of an Australian nation'. W.G. McMinn was doubtful whether Parkes was seriously in favour of the union of the three largest colonies and argued that perhaps it was 'something 'statesmanlike' to bolster his political position...at a time when he was in the process of making a great and controversial change of direction in the ...educational policy.' Although Parkes briefly restated, in an 1881 article, his advocacy of the 'joining hands' of two or more colonies as an assistant to federation by leading the way, he later referred to the 'tentative form' of these earlier proposals and suggestions. Parkes' alternative provisional scheme in 1881 was the creation of a 'Federal Council' (which he afterwards abandoned). As the emergent 'patriarch among colonial politicians' Parkes' influence was significant and his repeated protestations on the federal issue cannot be seen at this stage as being directed towards the final resolution of the federal question but more as a means to employ his influence to generate public awareness and momentum on the issue. Douglas, 'An Australian Nation': 1,4; McMinn, *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia*: 91; Parkes, 'Intercolonial Agreement', 380; Jose, *Builders and Pioneers of Australia*: 86; Sir Henry Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*. London: Longmans, Green, & Co, 1892: 583.

against federation at this point in time. Of paramount concern was the development and maintenance of six separate political entities, in which each steadfastly held that they each already possessed 'all the elements of national life and prosperity.'<sup>56</sup> The definitive markers of this colonial insularity and its derivatives intercolonial rivalry and jealousy were; the establishment of divergent and often-antagonistic tariff policies, separately constructed intracolony railway networks, competitively developed telegraphic communication systems and shifting colonial alliances.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, no formal relationships existed between the colonies and consequently matters of 'mutual' concern were addressed irregularly at Intercolonial conferences.<sup>58</sup> This consultative forum provided the colonies with the means to adjust relations without the sacrifice of any of their legislative powers. Yet, they required the participants to negotiate the massive obstacle of the vested interests that each of the colony's delegates had in their

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<sup>56</sup> Parkes, 'An Australian Nation': 330.

<sup>57</sup> The expansion of railways and telegraphic communications did initiate the gradual breakdown of isolation, which had instigated and preserved colonial insularity, yet in both technological advancements the colonies had 'manifestly not cooperated' with each other in their implementation. Contrary to the homage paid at each successive intercolonial railway and telegraphic linkage, as the 'emblems of the congenial feelings which unite them to rejoice, each in the resources and advancement of the other' there developed further grounds for hostility and competition. The rivalry between New South Wales and Victoria intensified over the competition for railway trade and the associated freight revenue. Relations between Queensland and South Australia remained hostile following the 'intercolonial warfare' in the late 1860s and early 1870s over the alternative land routes to connect overseas cable at Port Darwin. Price Howell, 'Comparative Statistics of Australian Railways,' *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 62: 1 (March 1899): 83-124; Ann Moyal, *Clear Across Australia: A History of Telecommunications*. Melbourne: Nelson, 1984: 24; Clark, 'Australian Economic Problems': 433-36; Livingston, *The Wired Nation*: 62-72.

<sup>58</sup> Eight Intercolonial conferences were held between 1863 and 1880. The non-representation of all the colonies at significant meetings and the frequent abrogation of agreements encouraged a cynical view of the consultative worth of these conferences. 'Little, if any, good has resulted from previous conferences', A. H. Palmer Queensland's Colonial Secretary remarked to Parkes in 1880. F.J. Mines' alternatively argued that the integration of the Australian colonies, in government matters, was achieved through Intercolonial conferences as it created 'a confederation of governmental agencies and a network of governmental relations.' A significant obstacle to the development and maintenance of a spirit of cooperation between the colonies was the instability of colonial government's. George Craig argued that the 'longevity of the colonial Cabinets is not much to boast of....The average duration of the Victorian Cabinets is set down in Greville's "Text Book" at sixteen months; of New South Wales at sixteen months; of South Australia at thirteen months; of Tasmania at twenty months; and of Queensland at twenty-seven months. de Garis, 'Britain and the Australian Federation Movement': 10; A.H. Palmer to Henry Parkes, Colonial Secretary, New South Wales, 22 June 1880 cited in Queensland Parliament, Legislative Assembly, *Coloured Labour in Queensland: A Collective of Papers Ordered to be Printed by the Legislative Assembly, 1861-1906*. Volume 1. Brisbane: Government Printer & Pugh Printing Office, 1861-1906; Mines, 'The Integration of the Australian Colonies', 45, 61; Geo. C. Craig, 'The Griffith Policy,' *Queensland Review*, 1: 3 (June 1886): 197-207.

own local independence.<sup>59</sup> Parkes held that despite the 'uniform discouragement' of these intercolonial gatherings they were the 'natural nurseries of the federal principle', though he conceded that the 'sources of [Australian] national life are not sufficiently cleared of the mud of local interests for the stream to flow uninterruptedly and freely.'<sup>60</sup> In their pursuit of 'careers of careless or of deliberate isolation' each colony had fortified and defended their individualism and independence.<sup>61</sup> The resultant colonial formation was frankly portrayed in 1881:

Australia as at present divided into the several colonies....alienated from each other by simple land marks or rivers, laid down with severity...alienated by their respective laws, and the imposition of border fiscal duties, which have generated narrow and unnatural prejudices as well as isolated semi-nationalities almost as much as France is alienated from Germany, Germany from Russia, and Russia from Turkey. The inhabitants of these several colonies are first Victorians, New South Welshmen, or Queenslanders, and then diluted Australians. They think of, dream of, hope for, and work for the progress and ultimate prosperity of the individual colony, and by those selfishly isolated thoughts, dreams, and hopes and works, they forget and ignore the greater, the higher, the nobler, the worthier aim of the progress and ultimate prosperity of a united Australia.<sup>62</sup>

In this framework of separate principalities, each had been indifferent to the idea of a federal compact or repudiated it as a potential sacrifice of their individual

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<sup>59</sup> Despite the colonies general opinion that the conferences were not productive of beneficial results they did regard representation as necessary to protect the interests of their colony. The Queensland government 'did not anticipate that any very satisfactory results would be obtained as far as this colony was concerned' from the 1878 Cable Conference in Melbourne, 'yet it was desirable...that a representative of this colony should be present to set forth what the Government of Queensland conceived to be right in the matter.' The Hon. T.L. Murray Prior, Member of the Queensland Legislative Council, demonstrated the existent tensions between Queensland and South Australia, he hoped that Queensland's Postmaster General 'would be wary of South Australia' at the Cable Conference and 'that he would see that this colony was in no way bound to any line which would benefit the other colonies and not at the same time be to the advantage of Queensland.' 'Postmaster-General At the Cable Conference', 25 April 1878, *QPD*, 27 (1878): 14-15; Mines, 'The Integration of the Australian Colonies': 65.

<sup>60</sup> Quick and Garran claimed that '[m]ost of these Conferences had no direct bearing on the question of Federation'. Others however concurred with Parkes that these conferences were a medium for the eventual federation of the colonies. A. Blyth stated in a debate on whether the South Australia should be represented at the 1873 Intercolonial Conference, 'If great works had not been done by these Conferences, at least great works had been attempted, and it was only to be expected that they would lead year by year to the great work of federation'. Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 103; Mines, 'The Integration of the Australian Colonies': 66; Parkes, 'Intercolonial Agreement': 378, 380.

<sup>61</sup> Cavendish, 'An Australian Dominion': 387.

<sup>62</sup> 'The Intercolonial Conference and The Federation of the Australias,' *Victorian Review*, 3: 17 (March 1881): 623-38.

importance. 'No "Australian nation"', John Douglas<sup>63</sup> declared in reply to Parkes' proposed union, 'will "start into existence" without a complete alteration of the relations which at present subsist between the Australian colonies.'<sup>64</sup> Federation remained 'a dream in the minds of statesmen' for it was, in short, an abstract idea antithetical to the prevailing policy of colonial individualism.<sup>65</sup>

The 'great colony of Queensland' was specifically excluded from Parkes' 1879 scheme of partial union:

because her capabilities of soil and climate so clearly mark out for her a colonising career dissimilar from that of her elder sisters, while her noble extent of territory affords more than ample scope for the growth of a mighty nation.<sup>66</sup>

Douglas challenged this cursory explanation by Parkes and concluded that his reasons were insufficient to justify the 'reservation of our Queensland territory for the growth of a new nationality.'<sup>67</sup> Yet in conjunction with Parkes' rationale that the three colonies of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia were included due to the 'corresponding character of their leading pursuits', it is plausible to infer that the allusion to 'soil and climate' and a 'dissimilar colonising career' were muted references to Queensland's economic pursuit of tropical agriculture or more specifically the sugar industry's continued employment of a highly unfree coloured labour force.<sup>68</sup> Parkes' line of reasoning though veiled was certainly consistent with the ongoing southern and British disquiet over Queensland's introduction and

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<sup>63</sup> John Douglas (1828-1904) Squatter, Queensland MLA and Premier 1877-1879 and Federalist. Refer to Biographical Appendix. Waterson, *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament*: 49.

<sup>64</sup> Douglas, 'An Australian Nation': 3.

<sup>65</sup> Rowland, 'Australian Federation: Its History, Character, and Possibilities,' 151-60.

<sup>66</sup> The exclusion of Tasmania and Western Australia received no specific mention. Parkes, 'An Australian Nation': 333.

<sup>67</sup> Douglas, 'An Australian Nation': 2.

<sup>68</sup> The rapid expansion of pastoralism in Queensland was in accord with the development of the industry in the other colonies, as was the exploitation of mineral wealth. The major divergence in the character of the colony's leading pursuits was the permanency of the importation of coloured labour to alleviate the chronic labour shortage in the pastoral and sugar industries. Parkes, 'An Australian Nation': 337.

maintenance of this form of labour. The central concern was over the type of society that was being permanently established in the northern colony.<sup>69</sup>

Numerous petitions and a vigorous press campaign repeatedly emphasised Queensland's deviance and anticipated that the 'character of the institutions' imposed by the colony's climate and environment would result in Queensland being 'severed from her sister colonies'.<sup>70</sup> Queensland repudiated any attempt to 'fix the stigma of slavery' upon the colony and was aggrieved at the external incursion on a distinctly provincial matter.<sup>71</sup> The Honourable St. George. R. Gore,<sup>72</sup> Member of the Queensland Legislative Council, objected to the 'substance' of an 1869 petition that was adopted at a public meeting in Sydney.<sup>73</sup> Gore argued that it was 'highly disrespectful to the House and the colony....[and] He did not see how persons in Sydney, few or many, should lecture the Parliament on their morals, or presume to teach benighted Queenslanders.'<sup>74</sup> 'As far as Queensland was concerned', John Douglas affirmed in parliament in 1869, 'the [labour] trade was carried on with perfect propriety'.<sup>75</sup> Queensland routinely dismissed or discredited any criticism of its differential methods. Self-government had provided the colony

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<sup>69</sup> Queensland's dependency on coloured labour for the profitable cultivation of sugar rested on two premises. First, that without this source of cheap labour Queensland could not compete with the other sugar growing countries that employed cheap labour, except under similar conditions. And secondly, that the tropical nature of the work rendered a white labour force impossible, for the conventional wisdom was that in tropical conditions white men were incapable of the arduous labour involved. Michael Davitt, *Life and Progress in Australasia*. London: Methuen, 1898: 270; J.W. Gregory, 'The Geographical Factors that Control the Development of Australia,' *Geographical Journal*, 35: 6 (June 1910): 658-76.

<sup>70</sup> A petition was adopted at a public meeting in Sydney and presented to the Queensland Legislative Assembly in March 1869 was considered by Arthur Palmer, Member for Port Curtis, as 'nothing more than a lecture....[and] It spoke of slavery as one of the institutions of the colony....the documents were grossly untrue.' 'Polynesian Labour', 23 March 1869, *QPD*, 8 (1868-69): 193; *Leeds Mercury*, 18 April 1868 cited in Ross Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland: From Dreaming to 1915*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982: 241.

<sup>71</sup> Sir Charles Lilley, Attorney General, 'Polynesian Labour', 23 March 1869, *QPD*, 8 (1868-69): 194.

<sup>72</sup> St George Richard Gore (1812-1871) Squatter, Member of Legislative Assembly for Warwick May 1860-January 1862; Held the portfolio of Secretary for Public Lands and Works, January -March 1862 and Post Master General July 1863 - August 1871; Government representative in the Legislative Council July 1863 - August 1871; Waterson, *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament*: 70-71.

<sup>73</sup> 'Informal Petition', 15 April 1869, *QPD*, 8 (1868-69): 317.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*: 317.

with the authority to manage its own affairs and the manner in which this was instituted was strongly influenced by a deep-seated belief in Queensland's future through its vast economic potential. The guiding directive of Queensland development was therefore, as the historian Duncan Waterson stated, 'the Biblical concept of Queensland as an environmental *tabula rasa* upon which the real progenitor of progress, the entrepreneur, could and should be allowed to write as he willed.'<sup>76</sup> Rapid internal development to harvest the colony's 'potentiality of wealth' was the priority of the general populace and of successive Queensland governments. Within this framework the economic ascendancy of the sugar industry was a vital component in generating momentum and prosperity and these factors transcended broader social considerations.<sup>77</sup>

Materialist values and an untiring quest for prosperity pervaded each of the Australian colonies and bound each community together to produce particular colonial interests and characteristics. The developmental context that fashioned Queensland's distinctive traits rested on the colony's late settlement and attainment of independence, the extent and under-developed nature of the colony's vast territory, the hegemony of pastoral interests, an 'almost insoluble' labour problem and a sharp and enduring suspicion and hostility towards New South Wales; the latter the result of Sydney's pre-separation 'mismanagement' and the bitterness engendered in the course of territorial separation from the

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*: 320.

<sup>76</sup> D.B. Waterson, 'Thomas McIlwraith', Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce and Margaret Cribb (eds), *The Premiers of Queensland*. Revised Edition. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990: 119-141.

<sup>77</sup> The impetus that sugar cultivation provided to Queensland rested on the large scale capital investment that it attracted; its financial contribution to the colony's export earnings, which by 1884 was £454,759, and the rapid northward expansion of settlement it initiated. William Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland; From 1770 to the Close of the Year 1881. Volume 1*. Brisbane: William Thorne, 1882: vii; Geoffrey Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920*. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1963: 145; Queensland Government. *Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress*. Brisbane: Anthony J. Cummings, Government Printer, 1909: 201.



Mother colony.<sup>78</sup> This complex amalgam of historical, economic and environmental realities all combined to produce an intensified internal focus on territorial development. The overarching objective of the new colony was to maximise progress through the rapid development of its vast resources to overcome Queensland's delayed start and to propel the 'colony of youth and enterprise' towards 'a leading position among the provinces of Australia.'<sup>79</sup> The underpinning of Queensland's entrepreneurial pattern of power and influence, adopted to implement the colony's developmental directive, was self-interest and a 'selfish fear' of any external intrusion on or appropriation of the colony's wealth.<sup>80</sup> This blend of self-interest and distrust introduced a particularly defensive or retaliatory trait into the Queensland assertion of its independence.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, it aligned Queensland patriotism with a covetous desire for instant wealth, which was to be practicably accessed through the unrestricted proliferation and grandeur of the colony's developmental schemes. William Coote's précis of Queensland's political and economic orientation was that there was 'no country whose future may be

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<sup>78</sup> 'Editorial', *Moreton Bay Courier*, 1 January 1859; Knox, 'Moreton Bay Separation', 574-76.

<sup>79</sup> Francis Adams, *The Australians: A Social Sketch*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893: 34; Duncan Waterson, *Personality, Profit and Politics: Thomas McIlwraith in Queensland, 1866-1894*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1984: 24; *Queenslander*, 22 April 1882.

<sup>80</sup> Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*: 253.

<sup>81</sup> Glen Lewis figuratively referred to this as 'Queensland versus the rest of the world.' Insecurity was a perceptible feature of Queensland's assertion of its individualism, and was the result of an uncomfortable blend between the young colony's lack of confidence and experience and the almost untouched wealth of its material resources. An attendant trait of this insecurity was a heightened suspicion and jealousy of the activities of the other colonies, a go-it-alone approach evolved and was further intensified by the external criticism of its solution to the Aboriginal 'problem' and the colony's developmental methods, in particular the importation of a coloured labour force. The inherent paradox of Queensland's fears was that it was the speculative enterprise and capital from Britain and the other colonies, Victoria in particular, that financed and accelerated development. Queensland's stand off approach was displayed in the colony's early reluctance to participate in Intercolonial conferences and this essentially stemmed from a defensive fear that the colony would be required to relinquish a portion of its newly acquired autonomy and secondly that as the youngest 'nation' it would be subordinate to the larger colonies. Queensland was as a result absent from the 1863 and 1870 Intercolonial conferences. Glen Lewis, 'Queensland Nationalism and Australian Capitalism,' E.L. Wheelwright and Ken Buckley, (eds.), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism. Vol.2*. Sydney: Australia & New Zealand Book Company, 1978: 110-47; Francis John Mines, *Premier's Conferences and Other Intercolonial Conferences in Australia Before Federation*. Canberra: Arrow Press, 1976: 32.

more marred by the greed of classes, or of individuals, who cloak an insatiable avarice of power or wealth beneath ample folds of an ostensible patriotism.<sup>82</sup>

Queensland's 'urgent, underlying, and inextinguishable demand for PROGRESS' attained unprecedented magnitude in the 1880s.<sup>83</sup> The central figure accredited with accelerating and directing the momentum of this era of grand expansion was Sir Thomas Mcllwraith, Queensland's premier from 1879-1883 and in 1888.<sup>84</sup> There existed, the *Boomerang* declared in 1891, 'abundant evidence in the history of Queensland' that Mcllwraith was 'a statesman of larger grasp, keener insight, and inspired by a far wider practical spirit than his quondam rival Sir Samuel Griffith'.<sup>85</sup> Within the realms of federation Griffith is historically the more prominent of the two political leaders yet this was not always the case, as acknowledged in 1886:

in justice to Sir Thomas Mcllwraith be it said that Mr. Griffith did not first show such deep concern upon the questions of Australian Federation, Colonial Defence, New Guinea, nor the New Hebrides. Sir Thomas opened the door for the display of popular and distinguished Australian statesmanship, and suddenly a smart young lawyer slipped in, and gained all the kudos that rightly belonged to his predecessor.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> The powerful alignment of Queensland nationalism with unrestricted economic development clashed with Coote's Utilitarian ideals of progress, which prioritised humanitarian and social considerations. Christopher Robertson, 'A Re-Evaluation of Three Nineteenth Century Queensland Histories: *History of the Colony of Queensland from 1770 to the Close of 1881* by William Coote. *In the Early Days: A History and Incident of Pioneer Queensland* by J.J. Knight. *The Genesis of Queensland* by Henry Stuart Russell', Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1994: xiii.

<sup>83</sup> T.S. Oswald, 'Government, and Queensland Politics,' *Queensland Review*, 1: 1 (August 1885): 1-8.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Mcllwraith (1835-1900) Scotsman, Civil Engineer. Refer to Biographical Appendix. Waterson, *Personality, Profit and Politics*: 10; D.K. Dignan, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith: His Public Career and Political Thought. A Short Essay', Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1951: 4-7.

<sup>85</sup> Samuel Walker Griffith (1845-1920) Barrister, Queensland MLA and Premier, 1883-1888, 1890-1893, Federalist. From Mcllwraith's announcement of his new Ministry in January 1879 his leadership style came under scrutiny by Samuel Griffith, with whom Mcllwraith had a long and intense rivalry. Griffith, as the Leader of the Liberal opposition expressed surprise at the precedent set by Mcllwraith choice of the title 'Premier' 'which was now heard of for the first time in any country governed on constitutional principles'. Further he 'trusted that the gazetting of a gentlemen as Premier was not a specimen of the innovation they might expect'. *Boomerang*, 5 December 1891 cited in Waterson, 'Thomas Mcllwraith', 121; Waterson, *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929*: 74; Dignan, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith', 120; 'The New Ministry', 21 January 1879, *QPD*, 26 (1879): 80.

<sup>86</sup> Craig, 'The Griffith Policy': 204.

In the early 1880s Mcllwraith's 'bold, prompt, and masterful' style of leadership appealed to and reflected the developmental aspirations of Queenslanders.<sup>87</sup> He was the archetype entrepreneur who successfully blended personal persuasion, political and financial power, with his knowledge of railways, pastoralism and investment, to inspire local, intercolonial and British confidence in Queensland's limitless opportunities for financial enterprise.<sup>88</sup> 'In Sir Thomas Mcllwraith,' the *Queensland Review* declared:

we have one of those men to whom the destinies of a nation can always be safely entrusted, whether to assist its prosperous progress...to evolve order out of anarchic political discord....In a young nation like Queensland, rising like another "Sea Cybele fresh from the ocean", such a man is like an able navigator, standing ever on deck ready to seize the helm when the unskilful hands of others have guided the ship of state among dangerous reefs or treacherous sandbanks. He is not likely to fall overboard at any stage of the voyage....His sole ambition is to place Queensland in the front rank of Australian colonies – to have his name transmitted to the future, associated with the foundation of the permanent prosperity of his adopted country.<sup>89</sup>

Mcllwraith's conviction was that Queensland was a great enterprise, whose resources must be developed with government direction of public and private capital, to acquire the utmost profit. This was neither innovative nor extraordinary. What was unique was the force of his personality and the magnitude of his vision.<sup>90</sup>

The inimitable quality of Mcllwraith's dynamism stemmed largely from his commanding personality and stature and his overt devotion to Queensland and its rapid development. William Corfield recounted his first impression of Mcllwraith, after he met him in 1881:

I was greatly struck with his personalty. He was a man, big and broad, both

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<sup>87</sup> Satge, *Pages From the Journal of a Queensland Squatter*. 247; Don Dignan, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 5 (1984):161-164.

<sup>88</sup> Waterson, *Personality, Profit and Politics*: 11.

<sup>89</sup> 'Anon.' 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith,' *Queensland Review*, 1: 2 (September 1885): 165-66.

<sup>90</sup> Waterson, 'Thomas Mcllwraith': 135.

physically and mentally. Yet like most strong men, he was very head-strong and impatient of obstruction to or criticism of his proposals. Neither could he understand that it was not given to every man to see quickly and to act promptly, attributes he possessed in a remarkable degree....McIlwraith was a far sighted statesmen, having the interests of Queensland at heart, and not a politician ready and willing to secure votes.<sup>91</sup>

A rough gauge to the idiosyncrasy or individualism of McIlwraith's personal characteristics can be conveyed through the similarity of the descriptive terms used by both his supporters and opponents. Gilbert Casey, a long-standing adversary of McIlwraith, described him in 1893 as:

Strong, able and determined. He inspires confidence. He is neither weak, vacillating, nor irresolute. He goes the complete pig or none. He has grit, force of character, and will power. He is a born leader of men....He is blunt, outspoken and brutal almost in his supreme disregard for the opinions of others. He is courageous, bold and defiant....He distrusts the people and honestly (I think) believes they are unfit for self-government. He believes they want an autocratic boss, and he feels quite certain that a divine Providence had him specially built for the job.<sup>92</sup>

McIlwraith's apparent magnetism did not rest solely on his authoritative personality but was inseparably linked, as one contemporary source suggested, to his 'comprehensive views and masterful grasp of the processes of material advancement'.<sup>93</sup>

From his entrance into Queensland politics in 1870, as the Member for Warrego, McIlwraith 'brought large and fecund ideas before the people'.<sup>94</sup> The essence of McIlwraith's 'vigorous originality' was that his progressive vision entailed the simultaneous exploitation and management of all of Queensland's resources.<sup>95</sup> His platform of broad 'national' development did not narrowly conceive the Queensland frontier as the terrain solely for 'an advancing wave of...pastoral

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<sup>91</sup> William Corfield, *Reminiscences of Queensland, 1862-1899*. Brisbane: Fisher, 1921: 89.

<sup>92</sup> *The Worker*, 21 October 1893.

<sup>93</sup> William Traill, *Historical Sketch of Queensland*. Facsimile Edition. Sydney: Lansdowne Press, 1980: 61.

<sup>94</sup> Adams, *The Australians*: 75; Waterson, *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament*: 117-118.

<sup>95</sup> Traill, *Historical Sketch of Queensland*: 61.

settlement propelled by British industrial needs and...British capital', but rather as a series of interacting economic frontiers.<sup>96</sup> Capital investment was the vital component, required to support the expansion of the colony's pastoral, sugar, mining, maritime, and commercial enterprises and McIlwraith's strength lay in his ability to attract and direct large-scale capital from Britain, Victoria and New South Wales.<sup>97</sup> His aim, Waterson asserted, was to be 'not only the catalyst but the magnet; not only the exploiter but the developer and the satisfier; not only the entrepreneur but the complete colonial man operating on a vast territorial scale.'<sup>98</sup> The appeal of McIlwraith's 'large conceptions' embodied in 'corresponding methods of application' generated a support base that was at variance with the colony's emergent political culture.<sup>99</sup>

'No other man', the *Sydney Morning Herald* reflected in 1900, 'has possessed an imagination and foresight of quite the same order; and no other man has had quite the same wonderful power of compelling others to believe what he imagined and provided for what he foresaw.'<sup>100</sup> McIlwraith's authoritative style, his broad business interests and boundless vision for Queensland's development effectively cut across Queensland's strong regional affiliations and the pastoral versus urban

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<sup>96</sup> McIlwraith's use of the term 'national' referred solely to the geographical entity of the Queensland 'nation' and this colonial nationalism was indicative of McIlwraith's and Queensland colonists' provincialism. Douglas Cole, 'The Problem of 'Nationalism' and 'Imperialism' in British Settlement Colonies,' *Journal of British Studies*, 10: 2 (May 1971): 160-82; Waterson, *Personality, Profit and Politics*: 31.

<sup>97</sup> Margaret Kowald and W. Ross Johnston, *'You Can't Make it Rain': The Story of North Australian Pastoral Company 1877-1991*. Brisbane: Boolarong Publications, 1992: 2-3; Waterson, *Personality, Profit and Politics*: 31.

<sup>98</sup> Waterson, *Personality, Profit and Politics*: 31.

<sup>99</sup> *Brisbane Telegraph*, 13 October 1892 cited in G.P. Taylor, 'Business and Politics in Queensland', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 1:1 (April 1967): 75-92.

<sup>100</sup> This report was in tribute to McIlwraith on his death in London on 17 July 1900. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1900 cited in Waterson, *Personality, Profit and Politics*: 6.

agrarian political division.<sup>101</sup> He was as the *Queenslander* noted during the General Election of 1878,

much more than the squatters' leader. Otherwise he would certainly not have drawn around him the indispensable support of leading men who had obviously no special sympathy with the pastoral interest, and who are pledged to dispossess the squatters.<sup>102</sup>

To a large section of the general public McIlwraith was seen as having 'something of the element of the miraculous in him'.<sup>103</sup> While this reflected in part his personal traits and ideas, it was also relative to the economic and political climate of the late 1870s. At the time of the 1878 General Election, Queensland was under the impact of an economic depression, primarily the result of the negative influences of drought on productivity and trade and the fiscal mismanagement of the Macalister, Thorn and Douglas Liberal administrations.<sup>104</sup> This in turn had engendered communal discord and disunity in the Liberal party.<sup>105</sup> Under these conditions arose the inevitable desire for political change and in unison with McIlwraith's overtly 'national' Queensland directive and his 'considerable reputation for energy and independence', a political context was created that facilitated the fusion of a diverse range of rural and urban interests under

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<sup>101</sup> McIlwraith had accumulated, in partnership with Smyth, by 1879 thirty-seven pastoral runs and the alleged primacy of this vested interest in pastoralism was used by his opponents to typecast his political orientation as essentially a squatter's platform. In part to dispel the squatter political bogey and in part as a response to the changing conditions governing the pastoral industry McIlwraith increasingly distanced himself from his pastoral business pursuits. By 1882 he had sold his runs and changed his official designation from grazier to gentleman. Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith': 15.

<sup>102</sup> *Queenslander*, 2 November 1878.

<sup>103</sup> While residing in Brisbane 1887-1893 the journalist, commentator and radical Francis Adams (1862 – 1893) was a beneficiary of McIlwraith's patronage and became a great admirer. He later stated that that McIlwraith was 'the only public man in Australia who, by any stretch of the imagination, one could call great.' Adams, *The Australians*: 75; S. Murray-Smith, 'Francis William Lauderale Adams', *Australian Dictionary of Biography – Online Edition*: <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu/biogs/A03001b.htm>.

<sup>104</sup> Queensland's Governor W.W. Cairns described the Ministry as a 'weak one' which advocated 'a perfectly reckless expenditure upon Railways, Roads and Bridges, and many other accounts. This has been the game – it deserves no more courteous term – the log-rolling game'. W.W. Cairns to Secretary of State, 6 December 1876, 'Letterbooks of Confidential Despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Volume 1. 29 January 1868 - 7 June 1892', PRV8225/1/1, QSA.

<sup>105</sup> W. Ross Johnston, *The Call of the Land: A History of Queensland to the Present Day*. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1982:108; Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith', 62; Wilson, M.M. 'The Development of Party Politics in Queensland: 1859-1900.' Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Queensland, 1938: 73-74.

Mcllwraith's political banner.<sup>106</sup> Charles Bernays, Queensland's political chronicler, accredited the government formed by Mcllwraith in January 1879, as being 'probably one of the strongest that Queensland has ever seen' and the successful return of the colony's economy to a 'state of prosperity' by 1881 was seen as the contemporaneous evidence of this strength.<sup>107</sup> Mcllwraith's 'almost magical' results created a heightened sense of colonial confidence, and patriotism/nationalism at Queensland's 'flourishing' future.<sup>108</sup> *Pugh's Almanac's* review of the 'Progress of the Colony' for 1881 projected the palpable sense of wonder and delight:

On all sides there are signs of life. Never before have such extensive building operations in all the towns of the colony been seen; and foreign capital is being introduced to an extent which cannot fail to give them a greatly increased development....Never before, either, has the Colony of Queensland received such attention at home or in the neighbouring colonies. The eyes of a class of capitalists, who have never before looked so far a field, are now turned upon this colony...as a new field for the disposition of their accumulations....There is now a general feeling of confidence, and as this appears to be well founded, there is every reason to hope that Queensland will soon be recognised as the *Colony of Australasia*.<sup>109</sup>

Mcllwraith's ministry was however a 'heterogenous collection'<sup>110</sup> and the maintenance of the 'bonds of union' relied heavily on the acceptability of his government's actions and its prospective legislation.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 7 November 1875; G.P. Taylor, 'Political Attitudes and Land Policy in Queensland, 1868-1894,' *Pacific Historical Review*, 37: 3 (August 1968): 247-64.

<sup>107</sup> The return of favourable seasons, an accompanying revival of trade and a rise in wool prices, in conjunction with a plentiful supply of capital were significant contributors to the restoration of the colony's finances to a sound basis, which Mcllwraith turned to his best advantage. Mcllwraith's first financial statement as Treasurer detailed a deficit for 1879/80 of £61,381 and his second statement announced in mid 1881 a £266,014 surplus. Charles Arrowsmith Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*. Brisbane: A.J. Cumming, Govt. Printer, 191985, 453; 'Progress of the Colony', *Pugh's Almanac*, 1882. Brisbane: Gordon and Gotch, 1883: 78; Dignan, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith': 81.

<sup>108</sup> 'Financier', 'Financial Result of Eighteen Months of Griffith Administration', *Queensland Review*, 1:2 (September 1885): 101-108; 'Progress of the Colony', *Pugh's Almanac*, 1883. Brisbane: Gordon and Gotch, 1884: 81.

<sup>109</sup> 'Progress of the Colony', *Pugh's Almanac*, 1882: 78.

<sup>110</sup> This collective included northern and western pastoralists, sugar planters, Catholics, miners, northern separationists, and mercantile and financial interests. A. A. Morrison, 'Colonial Society 1860-1890', *Queensland Heritage*, 1:5 (November 1966): 21-30.

Allegations of corruption and 'connivance' against Mcllwraith's administration initiated a significant though indeterminate degree of public and political suspicion of Mcllwraith's 'headstrong and autocratic' political style.<sup>112</sup> By 1882, 'the mud had been well stirred up' by three incidents.<sup>113</sup> The first was the bitter and protracted controversy surrounding the questionable process entailed in the Government's 1879 tendering of 15,000 tons of steel rails.<sup>114</sup> Next were Mcllwraith's 'bold and insolent defiance of Parliament' in proceeding with the Torres Strait Mail Contract in October 1880 and the Government's dubious 1882 dealings in the sale of portions of land in the Springsure and Peak Downs districts.<sup>115</sup> Although Mcllwraith and his government were exonerated on all charges of misconduct, the composite effect of these allegations would have undoubtedly contributed to some weakening of public support. The most significant challenge to the 'robust strength' of

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<sup>111</sup> The financial incentives used to maintain these bonds are outlined in John Fowler's thesis on Queensland. John Fowler, 'Queensland 1860-1888: Political, Social and Religious Comments.' Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1962: 75-86;; Morrison, 'Colonial Society 1860-1890': 27.

<sup>112</sup> Suspicions against Mcllwraith were also formed by the intimate connection between his business and political interests and this aspect is examined in G.P. Taylor, 'Business and Politics,' *New Zealand Journal of History*, 1: 1 (April 1967): 75-92; *Queenslander*, 10 March 1883; Roger B. Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1984: 69; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 85.

<sup>113</sup> Griffith was the leading protagonist in bringing these charges against Mcllwraith and his government. Oscar de Satge, the pastoral Member for Mitchell 1881-1882, reflected incisively that 'perhaps Sir Samuel Griffith's most valuable work politically for Queensland will be found to have been watching that the statesmanship of Sir Thomas Mcllwraith should not assume too broad a groove'. Oscar de Satge, *Pages From The Journal of a Queensland Squatter*. London: Hurst and Blackett Ltd, 1901: 247.

<sup>114</sup> Dignan refers to the Steel Rails Affair as 'the most spectacular charge of nepotism yet to arise in the Australian Colonies'. Initiated by a letter from William Hemmant, previously Colonial Treasurer in Macalister's third ministry, to Griffith, from London, in April 1880, Hemmant outlined what he contended were a series of irregularities in the tendering process for 15,000 tons of steel rails for Queensland. In particular two of the largest manufacturing firms in Britain were not invited to submit a tender and second, the accepted tenderer, Haslam Engineering Company were 'not rail makers at all' and were to purchase the rails at £6 a ton and sell them to Queensland at £9.16.6 when the average price was £5. Finally, 'getting the rails to Queensland' was, Hemmant stated, 'also fraught with corruption'. The shipping contract was given to Mcllwraith, McEacharn and Co. at 38s 6d. per ton. The method of transportation, full freight in berth ships was the most expensive means of transporting the rails and far above other companies. The linchpin to the allegations was the involvement of Mcllwraith's brother Andrew who held shares in the Haslam Engineering Company and Mcllwraith's and his brother's interests in the shipping company tendered to transport the rails. A Government Select Committee, and a Royal Commission in London concurred that the charges of connivance brought against Mcllwraith were 'without foundation.' Bernays asserted that the charges brought against Mcllwraith by Griffith were 'for political purposes...exploited for all they were worth' and Griffith's biographer, Roger Joyce, advanced that Griffith's 'actions had been compulsive, those of a man driven to extremes.' Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 87-91; Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*, 65-69; Dignan, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith', 89-98; William Hemmant to Griffith, 17 April 1880, 'Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1869-1884. MSQ185', Mitchell Library, Sydney.



McIlwraith's government came from the mounting political and popular disquiet over two key aspects of his developmental program, the land grant railway scheme and the proposed importation of Indian Coolies.<sup>116</sup> From mid-1882 these 'two matters' attracted 'the greatest attention...of the public' in Queensland and engendered a tumultuous political environment resulting in the July 1883 dissolution of Parliament and McIlwraith's subsequent loss of power.<sup>117</sup>

It was from within this developing political context that McIlwraith took the 'decisive action' to annex New Guinea in April 1883, and it was this 'spectacular item' in the history of the period which was accredited with being the principal catalyst for the later federation movement.<sup>118</sup> In the federal account the emphasis has consequently been placed on the annexation's subsequent and unanticipated role of activating colonial action on the federal question while the event itself was not substantively assessed. Yet it must be understood that this was initially an independent colonial action by Queensland and therefore needs to be placed in the matrix of Queensland's internal political environment. The politics of the early

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<sup>115</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*; 88-91. Taylor, 'Business and Politics', 82-83; 'Connection of B.D. Morehead and Co. with the Land Sales in the Springsure and Peak Downs Districts', *JLC*, 31:1 (1882): 84.

<sup>116</sup> In May 1881 the *Brisbane Courier* said of the McIlwraith government, 'there can be no doubt that its robust strength has been a good thing for the colony' and further it claimed that 'its legislative and administrative reforms' were such that 'a weak government could not even have attempted.' This supportive view had largely dissipated by the end 1882. *Brisbane Courier*, 12 May 1881.

<sup>117</sup> 'Hon. S.W. Griffith at Roma', *Queenslander*, 7 April 1883.

<sup>118</sup> Contemporary commentators affirmed the connection between Queensland's annexation of New Guinea and the Federal Movement. H.G. Parsons asserted in January 1884 that 'the popular awakening which is to remove this obstruction [to federation] with the others seems at last to have come....the movement which, beginning with Sir Thomas McIlwraith's Cabinet in March last'. J.B. Watson in August 1885 argued that 'It was a matter of regret that Sir Thomas McIlwraith was not a member of that Convention, as he it was that sounded the key note of necessary colonial federation by his diplomatic annexation of New Guinea.' Historians have acknowledged the impetus but the detracting elements involved and the failure of the Federal Council have tended to limit the treatment of the event. Quick and Garran allocate more space to the June 1883 railway union between New South Wales and Victoria than to the annexation. The State-by-State chapters in the *Centenary Companion to Australian Federation* note the New Guinea event but do not furnish, due to space constraints, any detailed discussion of the issues that surrounded McIlwraith's action. H.G. Parsons, 'Federation,' *Melbourne Review*, 9: 33 (January 1884): 90-95; J.B. Watson, 'Concerning Colonial Federation,' *Queensland Review*, 1: 1 (August 1885): 85-93; Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 109-11; Irving, (ed.), *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*: 6-7, 94, 99, 139, 287, 340, 400.

1880s testifies to the enduring and forceful presence of two distinctive Queensland issues, the strength of regionalism and the socially and politically contentious question of coloured labour. The local, intercolonial and Imperial ramifications of these particular issues would contribute a peculiar though fluctuating complexity to Queensland's involvement in the federal movement.

Transfixed by his vision for Queensland's future, McIlwraith resolutely declared that 'I want as a statesman to see...a much greater development of this country than there had been in the past.'<sup>119</sup> Rail construction, he advanced, was the linchpin to the accelerated exploitation of Queensland's natural resources. Its function was both economic and symbolic; a multiplier of capital, population and settlement, it was the acknowledged pathway to development, economic success and civilisation.<sup>120</sup> The prospective benefits of railway construction was illustratively depicted by Queensland's Agent-General in London, Thomas Archer in April 1882:

[Queensland's] progress has been rapid, solid and satisfactory. But that progress has been but tardy when compared with what may be expected in the future, when railways shall have pierced the remote interior....Queensland may be compared to a fruit with a hard and thick rind enclosing a vast amount of the richest and most nutritious aliment, and railways may be regarded as instruments for piercing that rind, and making the rich interior available for the support of civilised humanity.'<sup>121</sup>

McIlwraith's rail policy embodied two distinct courses of action. The standardised approach that consisted of government directed rail construction, financed from borrowed capital. In accordance with this policy McIlwraith apportioned £2,025,100

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<sup>119</sup> McIlwraith cited in Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith': 123.

<sup>120</sup> Waterson, 'Thomas McIlwraith', 135; Glen Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland: A Study in Economic Nationalism*. St Lucia: Queensland University Press, 1973: 36; P.S. Callaghan, 'Political Alignments in the Queensland Legislative Assembly 1878-1899', Unpublished BA Hons Thesis, University of Queensland, 1968: 26.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas Archer, 'Queensland: Her History, Resources, and Future Prospects,' *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, 12 (April 1881): 263-308.

of the £3,000,000 loan he raised in London in 1880 to railways.<sup>122</sup> The second and more controversial was the land grant system of railway construction.

Openly impressed with the scope and 'grand success' of the American land grant railway system, particularly its successful expansion of settlement, its construction of commercial empires and its cultivation of nativist sentiments, McIlwraith zealously promoted its introduction to Queensland as a means to compliment the government's railway program.<sup>123</sup> Queensland's vast territory and the prevailing emphasis on railway construction as the means to force the pace of development, had contributed significantly to the colony borrowing 'more money in proportion to its population than any other nation on the face of the earth', which McIlwraith asserted was not economically sustainable.<sup>124</sup> The 'prospect of railways being carried on by private enterprise' was, McIlwraith argued, an economic imperative, for it would, without risk to the colony's economy, effect the desired rail access to the untapped wealth of the Western portion of the colony, attract population and raise productivity.<sup>125</sup>

In 1881, to open up what McIlwraith described as 'a tract of country 300,000 miles in extent unequalled for soil in any corner of the globe....[and] rich yields of...copper...and indications of auriferous wealth', he entered into negotiations with a British syndicate to construct, on the land grant principle, a new,

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<sup>122</sup> This £3,000,000 loan set a new precedent for the amount of a Queensland loan but as McIlwraith detailed in a response to a letter, published in a British newspaper, which criticised his 'rush into an extravagant loan', the amount was to finance the 'needs of the colony' for three years. In 1881 McIlwraith raised a further loan of £1,089,500. Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 453.

<sup>123</sup> This tract of country would have been 300,000 square miles. The American influence on McIlwraith was significant he made three visits to North America and his praise of the dynamic success of the American system of railways by land grants featured regularly in his speeches. McIlwraith, 'Address in Reply' 26 June 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 24; Waterson, 'Thomas McIlwraith': 135.

<sup>124</sup> McIlwraith cited in Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith': 114.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*: 86.

transcontinental line from Charleville to Point Parker on the Gulf of Carpentaria, with branches to Hughenden and Cloncurry.<sup>126</sup> The total land to be granted to the syndicate as payment for the line's construction was 12,000,000 acres and the time allocated for completion was seven and a half years from the date of the passing of the Transcontinental (Land Grant) Railway Bill, which would ratify the agreement.<sup>127</sup> This 'astonishingly bold scheme', Bernays recounted, 'evoked hostility such as has seldom been witnessed in the Queensland Parliament.'<sup>128</sup>

The nexus between rail construction and the maintenance of political power had been a prominent feature of the Australian political landscape.<sup>129</sup> Acknowledged as the vital precondition for accelerated economic growth, rail construction had intensified the regional emphasis of colonial politics, with each region exerting political pressure to secure rail extensions and its associated benefits. Political survival essentially rested on the reconciliation of these regional interests and factions.<sup>130</sup> In the Queensland context regionalism existed, a contemporary observed, 'as a perennial contention, marked by virulent abuse and fierce

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<sup>126</sup> Mcllwraith first advocated the land grant system in 1874 when as Minister for Public Works and Mines he proposed the construction of a line from Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria, on the land grant principle. He resigned in protest to the opposition of his ministry to the idea. His 1881 Transcontinental scheme differed only in that the line was to commence from Charleville, however as part of the agreement Roma and Charleville were to be connected by rail constructed by the Queensland government. Mcllwraith cited in Dignan, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith': 85; 'Railway From Roma To Point Parker: Proposal For Construction of By the Australian Transcontinental Railway Syndicate', *QVP*, 2 (1883): 3-4; Waterson, *Personality, Profit and Politics*: 13; 'The Transcontinental Railway Agreement', Archibald Forbes, *Souvenirs of Some Continents*. London: Macmillan and Co, 1894: 1-7.

<sup>127</sup> 'The Transcontinental Railway Agreement', 2, 4; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 91.

<sup>128</sup> Another source of attack came from the *Telegraph*, which the *Queensland Punch* declared had 'roasted the Premier over the land grant railway system until there wasn't another bit of "fat" left for basting purposes'. *Queensland Punch*, 1 January 1883; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 92.

<sup>129</sup> The 1878 Queensland election was fought primarily on alternative rail policies. Its primacy as an electoral issue reflected the widespread belief that railways were the basic symbol of progress. The 'Queenslander' remarked that in 1877 'railways secured the lion's share of Parliamentary attention, as in one shape or other they have ever since.' Dignan, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith': 59; 'Queenslander', 'Six Years of Queensland Politics,' *Victorian Review*, 8: 1 (May 1883): 60-73.

<sup>130</sup> In an 1882 article John Wisker presented his synopsis of Queensland's political culture; 'The Parliamentary question, in short, is purely one of money. The purchase of political support by the distribution of expenditure on public works in the first business of a Queensland Government. Success in this task is a prime condition of

animosity.<sup>131</sup> Mcllwraith's 'national' program of development and his establishment of Divisional Boards<sup>132</sup> had seemingly countered the politically narrow outlook engendered by this sectional struggle on a geographical basis. His transcontinental railway scheme exposed the fragility of the accord.

In October 1882 the journalist Carl Feilberg<sup>133</sup> presented, in a letter to Mcllwraith, his appraisal of the political situation surrounding the land grant railway proposal. Feilberg told the Premier that, 'I can see you have great difficulties ahead of you....From what I know of Queensland I see your party is your difficulty.'<sup>134</sup> The vocal objections to the transcontinental railway scheme, from within the collective of interests unified under Mcllwraith's directorship, corroborated Feilberg's observations. It was these internal divisions that proved to be the most detrimental to Mcllwraith's cause.<sup>135</sup> The principal source of discontent emanated from the western pastoralists, who were alarmed that proposed railway scheme detailed the compulsory and large-scale resumption of their pastoral leases. In retaliation the pastoralists withdrew their numerically significant support from the Ministry. Intensifying the contraction of Mcllwraith's parliamentary support base was the apprehension of the northern urban interests of Rockhampton and Townsville, who

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existence.' John Wisker, 'Troubles in the Pacific,' *Fortnightly Review*, 31 (New Series) (January-June 1882): 711-34.

<sup>131</sup> 'Queenslander', 'Six Years of Queensland Politics': 61.

<sup>132</sup> Mcllwraith regarded the 'evil of localism' as the major obstacle to Queensland's rapid development, primarily because regionalism imposed a limited or narrow conceptualisation of development and thus prevented the consideration of a broader and bigger vision of the needs of the colony as a whole. The main purpose of the *Divisional Boards Act of 1879* was to shift the financial and political burden of local works away from Parliament to local authorities and thus dilute the regional focus within Parliament. Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 384, 396-397; Dignan, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith': 77; Queensland Government, *Our First Half-Century*: 71-72.

<sup>133</sup> Carl Feilberg was a political reporter for the *Brisbane Courier* and the weekly *Queenslander* until mid 1882. Refer to Biographical Appendix. 'Punch's Testimonial to a Journalist', *Queensland Punch*, 1 July 1882; Dignan, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith': 68.

<sup>134</sup> Carl Feilberg to Thomas Mcllwraith 13 October 1882, OM64/19/16, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith Papers: OM64-19.' John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

<sup>135</sup> Queensland's Agent General in London Thomas Archer indicated that as early as December 1881 there were 'grave doubts' that the Transcontinental Bill would be carried when presented to Parliament. He further

foresaw in the transcontinental railway an inevitable loss of trade, through the anticipated redirection of the inland rail trade away from their ports to Brisbane or Point Parker.<sup>136</sup> More generally, the 'bitter and implacable opponents' of the transcontinental railway invoked the spectre of 'foreign syndicates' assuming and 'exercising a preponderating control over our internal affairs'.<sup>137</sup> This stoked Queensland's 'dread' of an external incursion and seizure of the colony's wealth and induced many including commercial interests in Brisbane to oppose the scheme.<sup>138</sup> McIlwraith's reply to these fears and his claim that the transcontinental project would accelerate the development of the colony by thirty years failed to arrest the mounting regional concerns over the scheme.<sup>139</sup> The weakened political position of McIlwraith was further compounded by the opportunistic policies advanced by the opposition Liberal leader Samuel Walker Griffith.

By 1883, Griffith had clearly recognised the political mileage to be gained by his opposition to the land grant railway scheme, particularly after the formation of the anti-Transcontinental League. Accordingly he presented a political platform designed to attract the discordant elements of McIlwraith's Ministry to his party.<sup>140</sup> The western pastoralists were offered security of tenure via twenty-one year leases, and northern interests were lured with the return to the more attractive rail

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mused; 'Can it be possible that there are so many people foolish enough to quarrel with their bread and butter.' Archer to McIlwraith, 30 December 1881, *Ibid*, OM64/19/12.

<sup>136</sup> Morrison, 'Colonial Society 1860-1890', 27; Traill, *Historical Sketch of Queensland*, 60; Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith': 120-121; Corfield, *Reminiscences of Queensland*: 90.

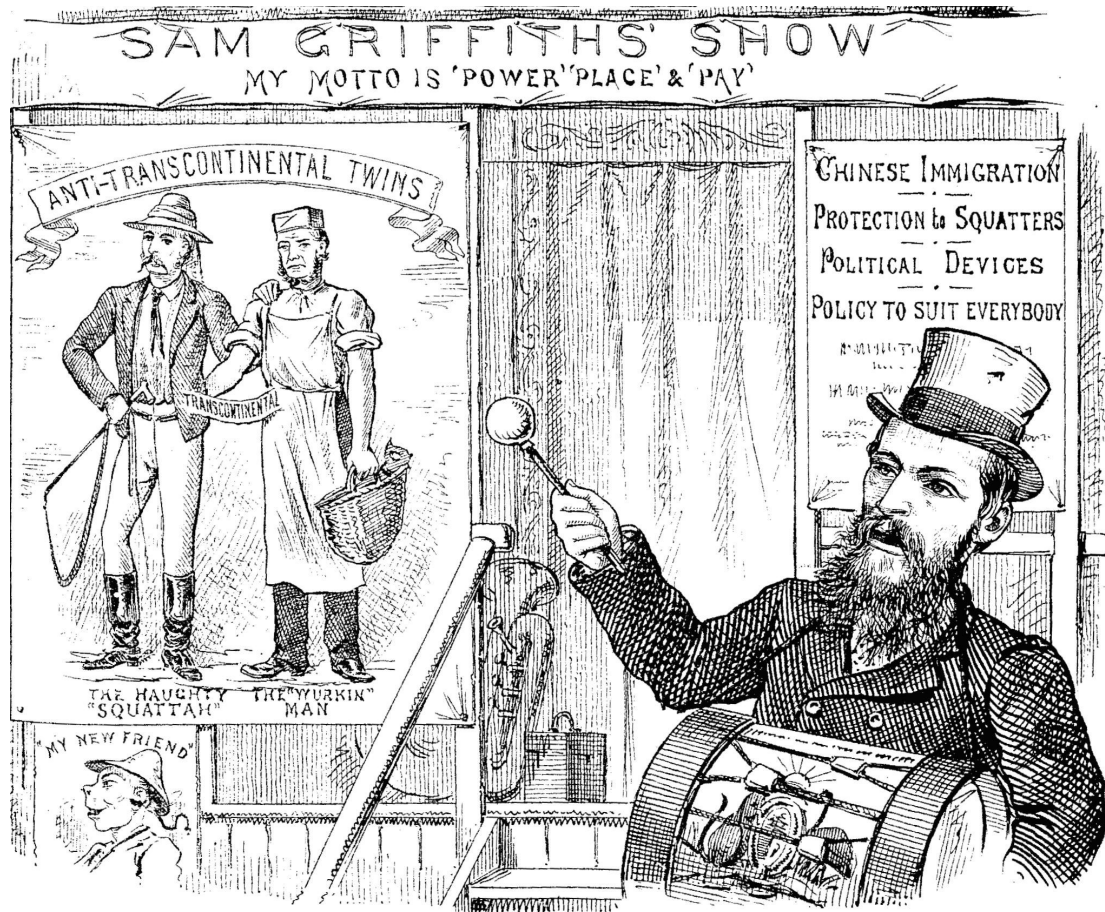
<sup>137</sup> 'Archibald Forbes on the Transcontinental Railway', *Queenslander*, 2 June 1883.

<sup>138</sup> Samuel Griffith, 'To The Electors of North Brisbane', *Ibid*, 4 August 1883.

<sup>139</sup> On the Transcontinental issue it is evident that McIlwraith had a strong faith in his 'wonderful power of compelling others to believe what he imagined' for J. Hamilton felt compelled to stress to McIlwraith in April 1883 that 'the objection to the Transcontinental is far stronger than you probably imagine'. Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith': 121; J. Hamilton to McIlwraith April 1883, McIlwraith Papers, OM64/19/16.

<sup>140</sup> Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 85; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 92.

policy of government-constructed extensions of the main trunk lines on borrowed money.<sup>141</sup>



**LIBERALS! "Keep yer heye on your father and he'll see —" *himself* though.**

Figure 2.1: *Queensland Figaro*, 21st April 1883

In this tactical application of policy Griffith had executed a reversal of his 1880 support for the land grant principle, articulated in the debates surrounding the *Railway Preliminaries Act*, and demonstrated his ability to adapt his views 'to take advantage of the position.'<sup>142</sup> A similar though more complex flexibility was evident in his opposition to coloured labour.

<sup>141</sup> The *Queensland Figaro* describe the situation as such 'Griffith....has gripped fins with the squatters. Till lately, he was their deadly foe....The "Unholy Alliance"...means that a political bargain has been made.' *Queensland Figaro*, 23 June 1883; Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith', 120, 122.

<sup>142</sup> John Murtagh Macrossan, a staunch opponent of Griffith's, succulently and critically captured Griffith's acknowledged flexibility in his epithet of Griffith that Griffith possessed a 'moral twist' in his composition. Francis Adams referred to Griffith as 'perverse and inconsistent.' *Queensland Figaro* referred to Griffith as a

‘As ever with Griffith’, Roger Joyce noted, ‘it is difficult to identify his own convictions about the question’ of coloured labour.<sup>143</sup> From the political perspective Griffith’s position, throughout his career, presented a pragmatic flexibility in relation to economic and populist factors.<sup>144</sup> Astute to the economic importance of the colony’s sugar industry and its requirement for indentured Melanesian labour to maintain its profitability, Griffith’s opposition, from the mid-1870s, was cautiously confined to the advocacy of tighter regulatory control over the labour trade rather than its abolition.<sup>145</sup> Griffith’s transition from regulator to abolitionist was analogous with the escalating internal and external public dissension on the issue in 1882-83.

The convergence of economic and social factors in the early 1880s intensified the political contentiousness of Queensland’s employment of coloured labour. Through ‘a perfect spasm of speculation’, principally by Victorian investors, ‘money was literally shovelled’ into the sugar industry and initiated an explosive phase of

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‘political juggler’. By 1892 William Brookes a member of Griffith’s ministry had concluded ‘that in your mind politics came first and ethics a long way behind.’ *Queensland Punch*, 1 April 1883; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 80, 92; Adams, *The Australians*: 70. *Queensland Figaro*, 7 July 1883; William Brookes to Griffith, 22 March 1892, ‘Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1891-1895. MSQ 188’, .

<sup>143</sup> In the November 1882 debate on the Indian Immigration Bill Mr. Hamilton stated that ‘he had noticed during the time he had been in that House that on no occasion had the leader of the opposition [Griffith] advocated the total exclusion of black labour’. The *Queenslander* remarked ‘No living man can glean from Mr. Griffith’s declarations in respect of coloured labour anything on which to base a settled policy.’ Hamilton, ‘Indian Immigration Bill’, 1 November 1882, *QPD*, 38 (1882): 1391; ‘Some Election Writs’, *Queenslander*, 28 July 1883; Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 73.

<sup>144</sup> In the July 1883 debate on the Transcontinental Railway Bill, Patrick Perkins, Minister for Lands in McIlwraith’s ministry ascribed Griffith’s flexibility to his overt desire to be Premier: ‘What I desire to call attention to is, that the leader of the Opposition has seen in this question of the Transcontinental Railway a short cut to office. He has shifted his opinions all round; he has shown so many fronts to the House from time to time, both on this and on the coolie question, solely as a short cut to office, and because it seemed the most likely manner to find friends in a most unnatural way’. ‘Transcontinental Railway Bill – Second Reading – Resumption of Debate’, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 139.

<sup>145</sup> A problematic feature of the 1870s debate on the coloured labour issue was the apparent divide between vocal political opposition and the practical attempts to abolish the labour trade. The Douglas Liberal Ministry, in which Griffith held the position of Attorney-General, had stressed their avowedly ‘Anti-Black Labour’ stance in the 1876 election campaign, yet whilst in power took no definitive action to abolish the practice. Two bills were brought before parliament in 1877 and 1878, to amend the *Polynesian Labourers Act*, and both were shelved at the second reading stage. McIlwraith in particular portrayed this inaction, despite the opportunity, as indicative of the Liberal ministry’s intent of primarily making political capital out of the issue. Joyce, *Samuel*



expansion.<sup>146</sup> A corollary of this 'spectacular' development was the industry's significantly increased demand for indentured coloured labour.<sup>147</sup> By 1881, it was evident to Queensland's sugar-planters that the supply of labour from the Pacific Islands was fast being depleted and pressure was applied to find alternative sources.<sup>148</sup> In response, McIlwraith's conservative government, in which the planter interests were influential, proposed the importation of 'labour of the servile kind...from British-India', through the revival of the *Coolie Act of 1862*, to alleviate the sugar industry's impending shortage of labour.<sup>149</sup> Under Queensland's guiding directive of maximising development this proposition represented a basic extension of the established policy of maintaining an indentured coloured labour force on the grounds that it was economically imperative. McIlwraith therefore reasoned that:

[he] was well aware that the colony was an European one. At the same time it was foolish to allow coast lands to go untilld because white labour would

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Walker Griffith: 54-55; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 67; Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith': 126.

<sup>146</sup> The 1876 *Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act*, was a major contributor to this expansion. This Act opened up expired pastoral leases around Mackay for agricultural settlement, however the cost per acre of 20 and 25 shillings was prohibitive to most except capital rich planters. Price Fletcher depicted the atmosphere engendered at this time: 'In 1879 and 1880 the desire to enter into the pursuit developed almost into a mania; land was everywhere selected with a view to cane growing; capitalists vied with one another in their eagerness to start plantations, and every river, creek, or inlet...was explored, and, if suitable selected'. Quote from Harold Finch-Hatton a prominent planter of the period cited in Adrian Graves, *Cane And Labour: The Political Economy of the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1862-1906*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: 1993: 16; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 319; Price Fletcher, (ed.), *Queensland: It's Resources and Institutions*. Brisbane: Government Printer, 1886: 4; Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*: 136.

<sup>147</sup> The upsurge in the demand for labour was demonstrated by an associated increase in labour recruiting activities. In 1880, 22 voyages were made by Queensland's recruiting vessels and the total number of recruits was 1997; in 1881, 31 voyages and 2643 recruits, 1882 34 voyages and 3140 recruits and 1883 59 voyages and 5276 recruits. Clive Moore, *Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay*. Port Moresby: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and University of Papua New Guinea, 1985: 25; Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*: 135.

<sup>148</sup> Correspondence with the Indian Government on the prospect of Indian emigration to Queensland was initiated in April 1881. A.H. Palmer Colonial Secretary to the Government of India, 25 April 1881 cited in Queensland Parliament, *Coloured Labour in Queensland*.

<sup>149</sup> Attempts were made in Parliament in 1874 to reactivate the 1862 *Coolie Act* 'to promote the growth of sugar and other tropical products along the north-east coast of the Queensland' but were defeated by eighteen votes to twelve. Quote from John Douglas, 'The Electors of Bulimba', *Queensland Punch*, 1 June 1882; I. N. Moles, 'The Indian Coolie Labour Issue in Queensland,' *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 5: 5 (1957): 1345-72; E.C. Buck, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India to Sir Arthur Palmer, Colonial Secretary, 13 September 1881 cited in Queensland Parliament, *Coloured Labour in Queensland*.

not work them. A large amount of the prosperity of the country depended upon the sugar industry.<sup>150</sup>

Prior to the late 1870s, the majority of colonists had enthusiastically endorsed the economically expedient policies of successive Queensland governments and within this context the opposition aroused by the importation of coloured labour had been essentially nullified. John Wisker's 1882 article entitled 'The Victim of Civilisation' presented a succinct and sardonic depiction of the supremacy of economic factors over moral ones:

Amongst the sugar planters of Queensland the necessity of employing black labour is regarded as an axiom. It is not worthy of discussion. Any person who affirms that sugar can be cultivated without assistance of the Kanakas may deem himself fortunate if he receives an answer of any kind. As a rule he meets with the same treatment as that accorded to a civilian who attempts to speak of army organization to a tightly-strapped barnacle of the Horse Guard....Those who hold the opinion that grave future evils can be averted only by prohibiting this so-called "free labour" are generally met with the epithets "humanitarians" and "sentimentalists" – hard names in a country where the expression "liar" is rapidly coming to be looked upon as a compliment.<sup>151</sup>

The 'pouring in' of the Chinese to Queensland's northern goldfields during the 1870s initiated a significant shift in the public and political consideration of the coloured labour question.<sup>152</sup> In their significant numeric presence on the goldfields and their apparent material success, the Chinese were perceived as representing a direct economic threat to European miners, who saw their labour and their livelihood being undermined by this imported group of 'coloured' labourers.<sup>153</sup> This perception of economic competition quickly evolved into concerted labour action against the increasing presence of the Chinese. Public support was invoked

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<sup>150</sup> Whilst McIlwraith did profess an understanding of the social concerns surrounding the employment of coloured labour, a governing feature of his entrepreneurial political style was that he always tried to take what he considered to be the unsentimental businesslike approach. McIlwraith cited in Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith': 124.

<sup>151</sup> John Wisker, 'The Victim of Civilisation,' *Victorian Review*, 35 (September 1882): 540-51.

<sup>152</sup> Douglas, 'The Electors of Bulimba', *Queensland Punch*, 1 June 1882.

<sup>153</sup> The estimated number of Chinese resident in Queensland in 1877 was 12,801 and in 1880 13,234. Queensland Parliament, *Coloured Labour in Queensland*. 2.

through an emphasis on the social threat posed to white Queensland by the Chinese.<sup>154</sup> That Queensland's progress was defined only in white ethnocentric terms was affirmed and fortified in the Government's introduction of restrictive legislation to prevent further Chinese immigration and therefore remove the Chinese 'menace'.<sup>155</sup> John Douglas later recounted the reasoning for his government's recourse to legislation stating that they had done so 'in order to preserve our own autonomy and to prevent the typical character of our colonisation from being imperilled'.<sup>156</sup> A more forthright interpretation was advanced by Queensland's Governor Cairns, who asserted that the Bill was 'brought forward with no other reason than to throw a sop to the jealous exclusiveness of the white mining population of the North.'<sup>157</sup> The emergent form of widespread racial intolerance had as its underlying cause white fears about cheap labour. This basic premise became more entrenched and more encompassing during the 1880s. White labour progressively evolved into a more organised pressure group and targeted all aspects of Queensland's employment of coloured labour in its movement towards a legally mandated racial segregation of the labour market.<sup>158</sup>

By the early 1880s, the manifest parity between the concerns of white labourers and the Liberal party's espoused opposition to coloured labour established a forceful alliance that was later to be problematic. To this collective, which Thomas

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<sup>154</sup> Elaine Thompson, *Fair Enough: Egalitarianism in Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1994: 30-33; Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland*: 224-230.

<sup>155</sup> The *Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act of 1877*, Queensland's Colonial Secretary, Sir Arthur Hunter Palmer informed the Victorian premier Graham Berry in September 1880, had 'effectively dealt' with the Chinese 'question' in Queensland for it 'has had the effect of almost completely putting a stop to Chinese immigration to this Colony.' Queensland Parliament, *Coloured Labour in Queensland*, 1: 3; Harrison Bryan, 'John Murtagh Macrossan and the Genesis of the White Australia Policy', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 5:2 1954: 885-906.

<sup>156</sup> Douglas, 'The Electors of Bulimba', *Queensland Punch*, 1 June 1882.

Archer, Queensland's Agent-General, acknowledged in May 1883 as a 'very large, influential, and constantly increasing party', the purported practical economic benefits of the proposed importation of Coolie labour were superfluous to the broader threat it engendered to the colony's social fabric.<sup>159</sup> The 'Inhabitants of Brisbane' accordingly voiced their 'deepest anxiety and alarm' over the proposal in a petition drafted at a public meeting held in July 1882:

That your Petitioners...consider it to be manifestly unjust that they should be dispossessed by an alien race whose semi-civilisation is antagonistic to, and whose mode of life and social customs have nothing in common with our own. That your Petitioners are strongly convinced that the labour market will be seriously disturbed...that our political and social institutions would be endangered by the presence amongst us of an alien people; and that your Petitioners, as members of the Anglo-Saxon race, consider they have a stronger claim upon the paternal care of Parliament than Asiatics or Coolies, and therefore claim your protection.<sup>160</sup>

The vocal opposition of the colony's southern constituents presented, as Douglas tendered, a 'definite expression to our convictions as to the road we have to travel'.<sup>161</sup> The apparent clarity of these ethnocentric convictions, on the Coolie and coloured labour issue in general, became more ambiguous in the central and northern regions of the colony. The 'Residents of the Wide Bay District' declared in a petition that they were 'not antagonistic to the introduction of Polynesian labourers', yet were 'decidedly antagonistic to having Chinese and Coolie labourers brought into the colony'.<sup>162</sup> In the North the employment of 'a coloured race of labourers' was seen as 'the secret of their success and a main feature in

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<sup>157</sup> W.W. Cairns to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 May 1875, 'Letterbooks of Confidential Despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Volume 1. 29 January 1868 - 7 June 1892', 71.

<sup>158</sup> Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations, 1788-1993*. St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1994: 100-101.

<sup>159</sup> Thomas Archer cited in *Times*, 17 May 1883.

<sup>160</sup> The meeting was held at Town Hall 26 July 1882. 'The Humble Petition of the Inhabitants of Brisbane, in Public Meeting Assembled' undated (July 1882) cited in Queensland Parliament. Legislative Assembly (1859-1922), *Coloured Labour in Queensland: A Collective of Papers Ordered to be Printed by the Legislative Assembly, 1861-1906*. Volume 2. Brisbane: Government Printer & Pugh Printing Office, 1861-1906; *Pugh's Almanac 1883*. Brisbane: Gordon and Gotch, 1884: 75.

<sup>161</sup> Douglas, 'The Electors of Bulimba', *Queensland Punch*, 1 June 1882.

<sup>162</sup> Residents of the Wide Bay District, 'Proposed Extension of Facilities For Employment of Polynesian Labour' [Petition] 1882 cited in Queensland Parliament, *Coloured Labour in Queensland*, Volume 2.

their future prospects.<sup>163</sup> In essence these diverse opinions on the question of coloured labour reflected each regions different stage of development. Thus in the more developed south, Queensland's enduring motivational maxim of economically expedient development was under challenge. Griffith therefore argued that 'it was said that a great deal more money would be made with than without black labour; but money was not the only object.'<sup>164</sup> Alternatively, in the north where the process of expansion and development was more recent, economic factors governed and in accordance with this the progress driven McIlwraith countered Griffith:

the Hon. Member said that men went to the North as if their only object in life was the accumulation of capital – as if the accumulation of capital was some unworthy aim to be detested by every well-behaved member of Parliament. What were they all trying to do but to accumulate wealth?<sup>165</sup>

The significant economic relationship between the sugar industry and the north's prosperity resulted in coloured labour, by the early 1880s, being most directly associated with North Queensland. Such a demarcation firstly provided the 'Anti-Black Labour' lobby, most vociferous in the South, a focal area for distain, and second, exemplified the divergent interests of the northern and southern regions of the colony.

Separatism was the symptomatic expression of the growing divide between Southern and Northern interests. The July 1882 formation in Townsville of the Northern Separation League confirmed the intensification of the North's general discontent with Brisbane's administration of the region. In this initial stage of separation movement there was no obvious link between the formation of the

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<sup>163</sup> R.J. Jeffray, 'Queensland Planters: An Exculpation,' *Fortnightly Review*, 32 New Series (July 1882): 294-307.

<sup>164</sup> Report of a speech made by Griffith in Brisbane, 24 January 1882 read by McIlwraith, 'Address in Reply', 4 July 1882, *QPD*, 37 (1882): 15.

League and the specific issue of coloured labour. This however was not the perception of Thadeus O'Kane, the persuasive editor of Charters Tower's working class racist paper the *Northern Miner*. O'Kane argued that the motivation for the movement was solely based on the sugar planters desire to introduce Coolies. Christine Doran, in her detailed analysis of North Queensland Separatism, argued that the prominence of Liberals in the movement in Townsville, the absence of references to Coolies at the Townsville and Cooktown meetings, and Mackay's indifference collectively discredits O'Kane's assertion. Doran reasoned that O'Kane seemed to 'grasp any available argument to attack separationists' and thus his association of the movement with Coolies was calculated to arouse the opposition of miners and working men in general against the movement.<sup>166</sup> Despite the League refuting the indictment the influence of this negative association between coloured labour and separation expanded. In April 1883 the *Queensland Figaro* presented their précis of the North's purported separatist demands: 'But says the North you fellows down South won't let us have them; and if you won't we'll go to the foot of the throne, and pray for Coolies and Separation.'<sup>167</sup> Indicative of the mounting political tensions engendered by the sugar industry's worsening labour shortage and the broader social debate over Indian labour was the League's decision to suspend its activities. The interplay between separation and the coloured labour question however became more apparent and forceful in Queensland in 1884. By early 1886 it had tentatively intersected with the federal movement and from this point the fused issues of separation and coloured labour increasingly occupied the unusual position of

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<sup>165</sup> McIlwraith, 'Labourers from British India Act Repeal Bill', 27 July 1882, *Ibid*: 194.

<sup>166</sup> Doran, 'North Queensland Separatism in the Nineteenth Century.' 141-45; Morrison, 'Colonial Society 1860-1890': 27.

<sup>167</sup> 'Figaro' on the Coolie Question', *Queensland Figaro*, 7 April 1883.

being both an impetus for the broader cause of federation and an impediment to Queensland's involvement in this federal mobilisation.

At its core the question of coloured labour and separation was essentially a reflection of the regional and social tensions within Queensland. The *Planter and Farmer* therefore argued that 'except indirectly and remotely, the people of Brisbane have no concern in this coolie labour question'.<sup>168</sup> Yet in the intensifying social debate over 'Coolie' labour the strength of the 'feeling of exclusiveness' espoused by 'the working men of Brisbane' in collaboration with the Liberal party's opposition constituted a significant pressure group that further weakened McIlwraith's support base.<sup>169</sup> William Brookes confirmed this in July 1882 when he declared that 'the people of Brisbane thoroughly detest the Government'.<sup>170</sup> In combination with the western pastoralists' disquiet over the Transcontinental Railway scheme, the retraction of southern political support practically effaced the 'robust strength' of McIlwraith's 'solid party' to the extent that William Walsh described McIlwraith's ministry in May 1882 as being 'in their dying and decaying days'.<sup>171</sup> The accent of culpability for McIlwraith's tenuous political position did initially lay with the Transcontinental Railway proposal as '*the* question of the day', yet the 'Coolie' labour issue was to prove a far more affecting matter.<sup>172</sup> For it was recognised as a 'very vexed question' that 'singled out' the sugar industry 'as the

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<sup>168</sup> 'The Labour Question', *The Planter and Farmer. A Monthly Journal of Tropical and Semi-Tropical Agriculture*. (January 1882): 15-16.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> 'An Old Northerner' declared 'it is not saying too much to state that the average Queenslanders in the South knows no more about the northern portion of the colony than he does of China.' 'Observer', 'Letter to the Editor', *Queenslander*, 31 March 1883; William Brookes, 'Address in Reply', 5 July 1882, *QPD*, 37 (1882): 39.

<sup>171</sup> William Walsh, 'Indian Immigration Act', *QPD*, 36 (1882): 150; *Brisbane Courier*, 12 May 1881; Traill, *Historical Sketch of Queensland*: 61; William Walsh, 'Indian Immigration Act', *QPD*, 36 (1882): 150.

<sup>172</sup> McIlwraith would later attribute his political defeat principally to the Coolie question and this was reinforced by *Queensland Figaro's* assertion in September 1883 that 'Sam's party has been returned almost solely on the coolie cry.' The Transcontinental railway scheme had effected a desertion of voters from the western pastoral regions however the coolie labour question had a stronger influence in the 'centres of population'.

battle ground' for a broader and progressively more volatile social debate on what type of society Queensland was to be.<sup>173</sup> It was a question the *Queenslander* later noted that 'will shake our little society to its very centre'.<sup>174</sup>



**THE GOVERNMENT BANNER.**

**Artist: "I'm afraid that nigger won't take somehow, what can I substitute?"**

**Figure 2.2: *Queensland Punch*, 1 March 1883**

Intensifying this societal conflict was the 'outside' campaigns of humanitarian and missionary groups 'bitterly hostile' to Queensland's continued employment of coloured labour.<sup>175</sup>

McIlwraith to Kimber, 6 October 1884, McIlwraith Papers, Letterbook 1884-86:4-5; 'Whites and Blacks', *Queensland Figaro*, 13 September 1883; 'Banquet to Mr. Griffith at Roma', *Week*, 7 April 1883.

<sup>173</sup> Maurice Hume Black, 'Address in Reply', 26 June 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 4; Geo. C. Craig, 'The Sugar Industry,' *Queensland Review*, 1: 1 (August 1885): 54-64.

<sup>174</sup> 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.



With 'reiterative persistency' throughout 1882 and 1883, the Melbourne and London press in particular published letters and articles that depicted the 'extraordinary and scandalous' treatment of coloured races in Queensland.<sup>176</sup> Indictments were laid against Queensland's application of a 'doctrine of annihilation' towards its Indigenous population and the colony's contributive role to the 'barbarities' associated with labour recruitment, and the 'ill-treatment' and 'excessive mortality' of Pacific Islanders in Queensland.<sup>177</sup> The weight of this public attention on Queensland was chiefly directed towards the sugar industry's employment of indentured coloured labour.<sup>178</sup> Queensland was aware of this mounting campaign; under the heading 'Mischievous Slander' the *Queenslander* acknowledged that 'Queensland and Queenslanders have had some hard things said of them as regards the kanaka trade by recent writers in the Melbourne papers.'<sup>179</sup> The Queensland government was affronted by 'unspeakable malignity'

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<sup>175</sup> Thomas Archer to Thomas McIlwraith, 30 June 1882, McIlwraith Papers, OM64/19/16.

<sup>176</sup> The Melbourne based John Wisker noted that the question of Queensland's involvement in the Pacific labour trade had 'excited a good deal of attention' in Britain in the late 1860s and early 1870s but then the question had 'slept for years.' Reproachful of Queensland's defiance Wisker asserted that 'this difficult and confused subject received much attention at the *Australian centres of civilisation* as well as in England'. By mid-1882 Queensland's treatment of its Aboriginal population and Pacific Islanders had begun to feature regularly in the Melbourne and London press. In addition it had been the topic of the question of enquiry in the House of Commons and the subject of several petitions and deputations to the Secretary of State Lord Derby. Quote from R.J. Jeffray, 'Queensland Planters: An Exculpation', *Fortnightly Review* 38 July to Dec 1882: 294-307; Quote from Wisker, 'Troubles in the Pacific': 711- 728; Colonial Office Minutes, Queensland No. 10984 'House of Commons', 19 June 1881, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/42, AJCP; Thomas Archer to Thomas McIlwraith, 30 June 1882, McIlwraith Papers, OM64/19/16; Arthur Hamilton Gordon, 'Memorandum By The High Commissioner For the Western Pacific', 26 February 1881, *JLC*, 30:2 (1881): 907-911; Colonial Office Minute, Queensland No.1529, 'Condition of the Aborigines in North Queensland' 12 December 1882, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/42-43 AJCP.

<sup>177</sup> Wisker, 'Troubles in the Pacific', 715; Wisker, 'The Victim of Civilisation', 542; Thomas Archer, 'Notes of Interview with Lord Derby at the Colonial Office, 1st March 1883', 'Correspondence Respecting the Annexation of New Guinea and the Administration of the Protectorate', COL/1 QSA; Donald Craigie Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea 1870-1885*. New York: AMS Press, 1968: 153-55.

<sup>178</sup> The attention directed towards Queensland's treatment of Aborigines while part of the broader campaign to expose the 'brutality and inhumanity' of Queensland's colonisation process was more regularly utilised as a practical example of the prevailing Queensland attitude, in which there existed 'a tone of brutality and cruelty in dealing with 'blacks'' and this it was argued was assuredly disastrous for the thousands of 'another race of black men' being 'deliberately' imported. Merze Tate and Fidele Foy, 'Slavery and Racism in South Pacific Annexations,' *Journal of Negro History*, 50: 1 (January 1965): 1-21; Wisker, 'The Victim of Civilisation', 542.

<sup>179</sup> The 'charges' of George Morrison were particularly noted. Morrison had published, in the Melbourne paper the *Leader*, a damning account of the recruiting practices he had witnessed whilst on board the *Livinia* 27 May – 8 September 1882. Morrison had termed Queensland's employment of 'kanakas' as 'the Queensland slave trade' for the 'excellent regulation...is systematically ignored' by the 'slave captains'. The conclusion of the enquiry set up in response to the controversy created by Morrison's charges labelled Morrison a dubious character who had created an issue out of a perfectly satisfactory state of affairs. 'Mischievous Slander',

of these 'scurrilous', 'virulent and unjustifiable attacks' on the colony and consistently dismissed the charges as being 'baseless' or exaggerated.<sup>180</sup> During an interview in March 1883, Queensland's Agent General, Thomas Archer assured the Secretary of State for the Colonies Lord Derby:

every precaution had been taken by the Government and Parliament...for many years past to remedy any hardship or anomaly....and concluded by begging him to accept any statement made to him about coloured labour in Queensland 'with a large handful of salt'.<sup>181</sup>

The core principle embodied in this essentially conventional retort to any criticism of the colony's coloured labour policy was that Queensland was an independent colony whose internal affairs were the exclusive domain of its own legislature and therefore shielded from 'outside' opinions and intervention.<sup>182</sup> The *Northern Miner* therefore reaffirmed that Queensland was, as were the other Australian colonies, 'in possession of as perfect liberty and self-control in all domestic affairs as any of the nations of the earth.'<sup>183</sup> Griffith believed, despite being a staunch opponent of the Coolie labour proposal, that 'it was undesirable that the home authorities should interfere in our affairs'.<sup>184</sup> This essentially 'Queensland versus the rest of the world' mindset was endorsed and fortified by the McIlwraith Ministry's progress-driven governance style and had proved to be an effective counterforce

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*Queenslander*, 2 June 1883; 'Charges by Ernest Morrison in connection with the Polynesian Vessel 'Lavinia' cited in Queensland Government, *Coloured Labour in Queensland*. 2; Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*: 140.

<sup>180</sup> R.J. Jeffray's repudiation of John Wisker's article employed a similar form of argument: 'And what is Mr. Wisker's evidence worth? I have read his article carefully, and I do not find in it a single statement, express or implied, evincing any personal knowledge whatsoever in regard the matters he writes so freely about. There is not a line or a word in his article indicating direct or first-hand knowledge of the subject.' Quotes from Jeffray, 'Queensland Planters: An Exculpation', 295, 299; Archer, 'Notes of Interview with Lord Derby at the Colonial Office, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1883, COL/1 QSA; Archer to McIlwraith, 30 June 1882, McIlwraith Papers, OM64/19/16.

<sup>181</sup> This interview was in response to a deputation led by Sir Fowell Buxton who made 'allegations of kidnapping and ill-treatment of the Islanders'. Archer, 'Notes of Interview with Lord Derby at the Colonial Office, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1883,' COL/1 QSA.

<sup>182</sup> No intervention could come from the Imperial Government for as John Bramston noted in a Colonial Office Minute, 'the management of the internal affairs of Queensland is not under the control of Her Majesty's Government but under the Parliament and Government of that Colony.' Colonial Office Minute by Mr. Meade, 20 June 1882, and John Bramston, 21 June 1883, Queensland No. 10984 'House of Commons', 19 June 1881, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/42 AJCP.

<sup>183</sup> 'Federal Congress', *Northern Miner*, 31 December 1883.

<sup>184</sup> Report of a speech made by Griffith at Thornborough read by McIlwraith, McIlwraith, 'Address in Reply', 4 July 1882, *QPD*, 37 (1882): 15.

to the criticism of the colony's differential methods yet it had ostracising side effect.<sup>185</sup>

By 1882-83 Queensland's defiant stance on coloured labour had contributed significantly to the denigration of the colony as a backward or unrefined colonial society; a point of view which would be most commonly and effectively represented by the colony's caricature as a little 'hillbilly' boy distinguished by his huge hat, bare feet and inane expression. More specifically, Queensland's ongoing importation of 'a race of island unfortunates, who serve the purpose of making money for their employers' was seen as a substantial deviation, socially and economically, from the other Australian colonies.<sup>186</sup> This aspect was well demonstrated in 1879 when Parkes excluded Queensland from his proposal for a partial federation because Queensland was embarking on 'a colonising career dissimilar from that of her elder sisters'.<sup>187</sup> More notably the issue of coloured labour, John Wisker argued in September 1882, presented a 'strong' and practical reason for federation as 'all the colonies are interested in preventing this monstrous legacy from descending to the next generation'.<sup>188</sup> Wisker had identified what would evolve into a compelling racially motivated argument for federation. At this point in time however Wisker's argument was ineffectual because, as William Foster had contended in 1877, the subject of federation continued to be advocated through 'a vast amount of abstract and even

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<sup>185</sup> Within the governing parameters of self-interest and selfish fear Queensland's defiant stance against the mounting opposition to the colony's coloured labour policy was justified on economic grounds and exempt from any unwanted amendment. Lewis, 'Queensland Nationalism and Australian Capitalism': 120.

<sup>186</sup> Wisker, 'The Victim of Civilisation': 544.

<sup>187</sup> Parkes, 'An Australian Nation': 333.

<sup>188</sup> Wisker, 'The Victim of Civilisation': 551.

transcendental theorising' and as a consequence it remained outside the 'range of common political experience...little liable to be checked or tested by facts'.<sup>189</sup>

The 'painful and languid existence' of the federal idea within the Australian colonial context was essentially the result of two factors.<sup>190</sup> First, there had only been a 'sort of amateur interest in the subject' of federation and this had led to an indistinct but idealised presentation of the benefits to be attained through the political union of the colonies. The focus of this chapter has been on the second and more influential factor: the strength of provincialism, a direct consequence of the Australian process of colonial development. Geographically isolated from each other these 'young communities', the historian Wyatt Tilby explained, 'naturally concentrated very largely on their own internal and immediate affairs, often to the entire seclusion of more distant matters'.<sup>191</sup> Independence was the corollary of this separateness of development, embodied in the fervent demands for and the successful attainment by the Port Philip and Moreton Bay Districts of their territorial separation from the Mother Colony. Self-government solidified the autonomous existence of each colony and established an entrenched framework of separate principalities in which each framed their own legislation solely in accordance with their own immediate interests. Indicative of the pervasiveness of colonial individualism and independence was the colonies' propensity to refer to themselves as nations. The *Queensland Figaro*, for one, asserted that 'Queensland has burst through her swaddling clothes....From a little dependency of Australia, she is developing into a free and powerful nation'.<sup>192</sup> Further each

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<sup>189</sup> William Foster was New South Wales' Agent General in London. Foster, 'Fallacies of Federation,' 79-115.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> Tilby, *The English People Overseas. Volume V. Australia 1688 -1911.* 207.

<sup>192</sup> 'The Funniest Thing', *Queensland Figaro*. 21 April 1883.

believed that they already possessed 'all the elements of national life and prosperity' and this persistently prevented the advancement of the federal initiative for in effect federation represented an abstract idea antithetical to the prevailing policy of colonial individualism.<sup>193</sup> Indifference was as a consequence the most pervasive response to the federal advocates' endeavours to persuade the colonies 'to emerge from the stifling atmosphere of provincialism, and to breathe "a rarer ether, a diviner air" in the larger sphere of a Dominion.'<sup>194</sup> Responsible government was too new and the colonial administrations too practically occupied with the business of developing their respective territories to consider at length the implications of this abstract topic.

Queensland presents a dynamic example of the Australian process of colonial settlement. As the youngest colony, Queensland adopted a strident developmental program to rapidly overhaul the impact of its fiscally stifled pre-separation existence and consequent delayed progress. The 1879-1883 premiership of Sir Thomas McIlwraith represented the most adept demonstration of the pervasive internal desire for aggressive development and as a result the colony experienced a period of grand expansion. Yet it was two key aspects of McIlwraith's program for the colony's material development that proved to be corrosive to his strong political position. The land grant railway proposal, though McIlwraith argued that it would accelerate the colony's development by thirty years, proved to be in advance of the public's developmental aspirations. The proposed introduction of Indian Coolie labour exacerbated a growing social and regional divide within Queensland over the colony's continued maintenance of a coloured labour force.

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<sup>193</sup> Parkes, 'An Australian Nation': 330.

<sup>194</sup> Cavendish, 'An Australian Dominion': 387.

Intensified was the debate over what type of society Queensland was becoming and within these parameters there developed a 'clamorous popular prejudice against coolie labour'.<sup>195</sup> Economic rationales had routinely overridden these social concerns but were increasingly being contested by the southern-based Liberal/white workingman alliance. The regional concentration of opposition in the south put it at odds with the north where the bulk of Queensland's sugar was cultivated, exacerbating an already existent antagonism between the north and the south. Northern separatist demands were the symptomatic expression of the escalating dynamics of regionalism. The retraction of southern support on the coolie labour issue further eroded McIlwraith's political hold.<sup>196</sup>

McIlwraith's beleaguered political position was further compounded by the increasingly negative external focus on the colony's coloured labour policy. Humanitarian and missionary groups depicted Queensland's use of an indentured coloured labour force as 'the slave trade under a new name.'<sup>197</sup> Internally there was a growing awareness that the colony was acquiring an increasingly negative profile. William Groom acknowledged that 'there was something connected with black labour that was discreditable to the colony and was bringing it into bad repute.'<sup>198</sup> Queensland's defiant stance on coloured labour, despite mounting external and internal opposition epitomised the inviolability of colonial independence, which reserved to each colony 'the right to be masters of the

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<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> William Walsh, 'Indian Immigration Act', *QPD*, 36 (1882): 150.

<sup>197</sup> McIlwraith to Governor Kennedy, 20 June 1882, 'Western Pacific. Labour Trade in the Western Pacific', 'Commodore Wilson's Report of the Labour Trade in the Western Pacific: Correspondence Respecting', *JLC*, 31:2 (1882): 449-482.

<sup>198</sup> William Groom, 'Indians Immigration Bill', 1 November 1882, *QPD*, 38 (1882): 390.

situation'.<sup>199</sup> Yet it was apparent by 1883 that these external and internal pressure groups would continue to rail against Queensland's stance on coloured labour and that Queensland was increasingly under Imperial and inter-colonial scrutiny.<sup>200</sup> There was 'no wonder that Queensland should be looked upon with disfavour' especially after McIlwraith attempted to annex the eastern half of New Guinea in April 1883.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Arthur Macallister, Queensland's Agent General in London, cited in Archer, 'Queensland: Her History, Resources, and Future Prospects,' 295.

<sup>200</sup> The sharpening of Britain's critical focus on Queensland's continued maintenance of a coloured labour force was detailed in Queensland's Agent General Thomas Archer's 1883 Annual report, 'in February I replied to a very violent article 'Slavery in Queensland' that appeared in *The Leisure Hour*. That paper having declined to publish my answer, I brought it out in the form of a pamphlet entitled *Alleged Slavery in Queensland*. T. Archer, *Recollections of a Rambling Life. With Additional Chapters by Murdoch Wales*. Sydney: Boolarong Publications, 1988: 339-40

<sup>201</sup> Wisker, 'The Victim of Civilisation,' 545.





## Chapter 3

### A 'Very Cocky' Act: Queensland's 1883 Annexation of New Guinea.<sup>1</sup>

On the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1883 Reuter's Agent in Brisbane telegraphed London the 'extraordinary story that...the Queensland Government ha[d] taken formal possession of New Guinea.'<sup>2</sup> The reaction to this news was wide-ranging and diverse. One London newspaper referred to it as a 'high-handed action', because:

"Taking possession" is a matter for Her Majesty's Ministers, after ascertaining the will of the people through the Parliament. For Sir Arthur Kennedy, the Governor of Queensland, and his little Executive Council to usurp this function is a liberty that we trust will not be tolerated.<sup>3</sup>

Alternatively, the announcement by the Under Secretary for the Colonies in the House of Commons, of Queensland's action was made 'amid some laughter'.<sup>4</sup> The London *Times*, satirically remarked that:

Police magistrates are admirable and versatile officials; but this, we imagine, must be the first instance in which one of them has been called upon to play the part of a Columbus or a Cortez and to annex a territory larger than France.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the farcical features of Queensland's 'adventurous' act it was quickly acknowledged that it was also 'pregnant with still greater issues [and]...sure to provoke discussion.'<sup>6</sup> Queensland's independent and unauthorised annexation of the eastern half of New Guinea<sup>7</sup> initiated a fiery debate in Britain over the colony's

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Drury, Queensland National Bank's General Manager was in London when the news of Queensland's annexation was announced and outlined the humorous remarks made about the annexation and his amusement over them. Edward Drury, to McIlwraith, 20 April 1883, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith Papers: OM64-19', Brisbane: John Oxley Library: OM 64-19/158.

<sup>2</sup> 'High-Handed Action in Queensland', *Echo*, 16 April 1883.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> 'The Annexation of New Guinea', London *Standard*, 17 April 1883.

<sup>5</sup> 'Editorial', *Times*, 17 April 1883.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Dutch sovereignty over the western portion of New Guinea was proclaimed in 1828. The Dutch continued to administer West New Guinea as part of the Netherlands East Indies until the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia in 1949 and then the area was administered as a separate Dutch possession until 1963, when it was

coloured labour policy, and additionally 'resuscitated' the question of the 'cruelties practiced on the Aborigines.'<sup>8</sup> New Guinea proved to be an accelerant in a number of directions. The campaign of the preceding eighteen months by humanitarian and religious groups, opposed to Queensland's labour policies, intensified. McIlwraith's 'extraordinary undertaking' in New Guinea was to this collective a problematic and startling extension of Queensland's activities.<sup>9</sup> The Imperial Government's responsibilities to the Australian colonies also emerged as a matter of focus in the ensuing Imperial/colonial debate. A notable derivative of the Imperial and colonial response to the New Guinea annexation was its contradictory influence on the movement for political federation. Confirmed by the independent manner in which Queensland undertook the annexation was the prevailing force of colonial isolationism in the Australian context. This factor was further reinforced by Queensland's continued adherence to a coloured labour policy. Yet, the increasing opposition from the Imperial Government and the other colonies to this Queensland specific issue had the effect of presenting a question that had a potentially unifying result. Paradoxically, it was the Imperial Government's refusal to sanction Queensland's annexation, largely on the humanitarian grounds that Queensland intended to recruit labour from New Guinea, which incited the first practical advancement towards colonial federation. This chapter will examine the basis of this purported recruitment motive, which gained contemporary and historical legitimacy. The relevance of the New Guinea incident to the federal movement is significant for it contributed to the movement as a whole, while at the same time denoted the complexity of one colony's local social and political framework.

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integrated within Indonesia as the province of Irian Jaya. Paul W. van der Veur, *Search for New Guinea's Boundaries, from Torres Straits to the Pacific*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1966: 6-20.

<sup>8</sup> W.M. Mercer, Colonial Office Minute, 'New Guinea', 19 May 1883, Queensland No. 8520, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

Prior to the April 1883 attempted annexation of New Guinea there existed, to the Queensland mind, a disquieting connection between the intensifying intercolonial and British denunciation of Queensland's maintenance of a coloured labour force and the Imperial Government's establishment of successive enquiries into labour recruitment. Commodore James Wilson's<sup>10</sup> February 1882 'Report on the Labour Trade in the Western Pacific' had concluded that the labour traffic as regards Queensland and Fiji was 'now as a rule carried out legally' but that it was still 'objectionable'.<sup>11</sup> McIlwraith's prickly and dismissive response to this report presents an informative gauge of Queensland's attitude in mid-1882:

I have carefully investigated the particulars of the various abuses referred to by the Commodore in connection with this trade and find that very few indeed can be traced, even indirectly, to Queensland. Still, as Queensland employs a large number of Islanders, and as the abuses depicted by Commodore Wilson are couched in general terms and not sufficiently localised, the inference is left to be drawn that they exist in connection with the Queensland trade.<sup>12</sup>

A more concerned tone is discernible in Queensland's response to the Imperial Government's January 1883<sup>13</sup> appointment of a Royal Commission, into the working of the Western Pacific Orders, headed by Sir Arthur Gordon<sup>14</sup> and Rear Admiral

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Dutton was the Minister for Lands in Griffith's new Ministry. Dutton, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 26 November 1884, *QPD*, 44 (1884): 1584.

<sup>10</sup> Commodore James Wilson held the position of the Commander of the Australasian Station of the Royal Navy in 1882 and was promoted to Rear Admiral in late 1882. His views on Queensland and the labour question were clearly outlined in an October 1881 report to the Admiralty. 'In former letters I have expressed my fear that the extension of the boundary of Queensland to within three miles of New Guinea Coast was a dangerous move fraught with future mischief, and I see no reason to change this opinion'. 'Extract from Report from Commodore Wilson to the Admiralty', dated *Wolverine* at Sydney 26 October 1881 attached to Lord Kimberley Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor Kennedy, 13 January 1882 'Original Despatches from the Secretary of State for the Colonies: 6 January – 29 December 1882', RSI3382/1/23 QSA.

<sup>11</sup> 'Western Pacific. Labour Trade in the Western Pacific', 'Commodore Wilson's Report of the Labour Trade in the Western Pacific: Correspondence Respecting', *JLC*, 31:2 (1882): 449-482.

<sup>12</sup> McIlwraith to Governor Kennedy, 20 June 1882, *Ibid*: 481-2.

<sup>13</sup> The official instructions for this Royal Commission were issued on the 1st March 1883 yet it is apparent that Queenslanders had a broad understanding of the Commission's scope of enquiry by late January 1883. The *Queenslander* reported that 'Some information of a trustworthy character is likely to be obtained by the Royal Commission just appointed by the Imperial Government to investigate the conditions of the Polynesian traffic'. 'The Question of the Day', *Queenslander*, 27 January 1883.

<sup>14</sup> Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon (1829-1912) Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick 1861-66, Governor of Trinidad 1866-70 and Mauritius 1871-1874, Governor of Fiji 1875-1880 and Governor of New Zealand, 1880-1882. During 1878-1882 Gordon held the position of High Commissioner and Consul General for the Western Pacific. Paul Knapland, 'Sir Arthur Gordon on the New Guinea Question, 1883', *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 7: 27 (November 1956): 328-35.

Wilson.<sup>15</sup> The Queensland response to this enquiry, particularly from Mcllwraith and the colony's northern planters, denoted a defensive awareness of the Imperial Government's growing and authoritative mandate for change. Indicative of this was the erroneous belief that the focus of the Commission's enquiry was 'the subject of Polynesian labour' or more specifically that this would entail an investigation of 'the treatment of Polynesian labourers *in* Queensland'.<sup>16</sup> A Colonial Office minute, in response to the journalist's Carl Feilberg's letter to the *Times*, noted that 'there appears to be a wide spread notion that the Western Pacific Committee is enquiring into the labour system in Queensland.'<sup>17</sup> The appointment of this Commission so soon after Commodore Wilson's investigation, in combination with the misinterpreted focus of enquiry, introduced a more apprehensive tone to Queensland's response.

The *Week*, an avowedly anti-coloured labour publication, acknowledged the intensification of Imperial scrutiny and predicted almost gloatingly that sugar planters should anticipate 'the almost immediate interference by the Imperial authorities with the Pacific Island labour traffic in the direction of more stringent regulations'.<sup>18</sup> The Western Pacific Royal Commission was consequently regarded as a potential challenge to the functional authority of Queensland's autonomy. The Planters and Farmers Associations of Mackay and Maryborough, with Mcllwraith's endorsement,

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<sup>15</sup> These Orders had defined the powers and procedures of the Western Pacific High Commission established under and to enforce the Imperial Government's 1875 *Pacific Islanders' Amendment Act*. The Western Pacific High Commissioner was granted jurisdiction exclusively over British subjects within the Pacific region to ensure the 'good conduct of the Queen's subjects and the maintenance of legal restraint over their actions.' 'Report of the Western Pacific Royal Commission', *QVP*, 2 (1884): 945-67.

<sup>16</sup> The Colonial Office thought it unlikely that the Commission had 'set themselves to investigate the question of the treatment of Polynesian labour in Queensland' but did not rectify Queensland's perception of the matter and deferred replying to the Planters and Farmers Associations' petitions of protest and Mcllwraith's correspondence until the Report of the Committee was received. *Italics added.* Lieutenant-Governor Palmer to Secretary of State for the Colonies Lord Derby, 26 May 1883; Mcllwraith to Lieutenant-Governor Palmer, 22 May 1883; John Bramston to the Secretary of the Western Pacific Committee, 28 July 1883, Colonial Office Minute 'Western Pacific Committee', 26 May 1883, Queensland. W. Pacific No.12461, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>17</sup> Colonial Office Minute, 'The Polynesian Labour Traffic. Letter from Carl Feilberg to *Times*', 11 August 1883, Queensland No.13890, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43-44 AJCP.

<sup>18</sup> 'The Annexation of New Guinea', *Week*, 31 March 1883.

protested that this enquiry, on a question 'of the greatest importance to Queensland', was a 'great injustice'.<sup>19</sup> Mcllwraith additionally emphasised that there were 'very reasonable grounds for protesting' against the appointment of Gordon and Wilson for they 'are already strongly committed to one side of the question....I think it is too much to expect that entire partiality will be observed.'<sup>20</sup> The aversion to Gordon in particular, rested on his 1875-1880 governorship of Fiji, which had demonstrated, Aleck Ivimey claimed, that Gordon 'was consistently inimical to the planters' and as a result 'his name is almost invariably received with execration'.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, Gordon's reputation as a holder of 'firm humanitarian views' buoyed the external and internal opponents of the labour trade.<sup>22</sup> It was within this developing context of a sharpening focus on Queensland's continued utilisation of an indentured coloured labour force that Mcllwraith, with no authority from the Imperial Government and without consulting the other Australian colonies, independently annexed the eastern half of New Guinea.

This 'most important event', *Pugh's Almanac* recorded was 'fraught with momentous results'.<sup>23</sup> The most detrimental to Mcllwraith's cause was the ardency of the

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<sup>19</sup> Lieutenant-Governor Palmer to Secretary of State for the Colonies Lord Derby, 26 May 1883 and Mcllwraith to Lieutenant-Governor Palmer, 22 May 1883, Colonial Office Minute 'Western Pacific Committee', 26 May 1883, Queensland. W. Pacific No.12461, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>20</sup> Extract from Report from Commodore Wilson to the Admiralty Dated *Wolverine* at Sydney 26 October 1881 included in Lord Kimberley Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor Kennedy, 13 January 1882 'Original Despatches From the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 6 January -29 December 1882', A/46217 QSA ; Mcllwraith to Lieutenant Governor Arthur Palmer, 22 May 1883, 'Official Letters to the Governor: 7 January 1881 – 27 December 1883', SRS5275/1/11 QSA.

<sup>21</sup> Commodore Wilson referred to this depiction of Gordon: 'Sir A. Gordon, the late Governor, who, because he insisted on justice being done to the labourer, has earned the compliment of being heartily hated and abused by the planters'. Queensland's distrust of Gordon's bias was a valid one for Gordon would prove to be a decisive influence in negating Queensland's attempted annexation of New Guinea. Moreover, large extracts of a letter he wrote anonymously in May to the *Times* would reappear in the Report of the Western Pacific Royal Commission which indicated that his opinion was formed before the Commission took evidence. Aleck J. Ivimey, 'Fiji. 1. The Question of Federation. 2. Sugar Growing', *Victorian Review*, 34:1 (August 1882): 404-421; 'Commodore Wilson's Report on the Labour Trade in the Western Pacific. (Correspondence Respecting), *JLC*, 31:3 (1882): 451; 'A Correspondent', 'The Annexation of New Guinea', *Times*, 15 May 1883.

<sup>22</sup> The Aboriginal Protection Society for example referred to Sir Arthur Gordon as a 'great man'. 'Extract from the London Letter of the Melbourne *Argus* to 25<sup>th</sup> May', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>23</sup> 'Review of the Year', *Pugh's Almanac*, 1884. Brisbane: Gordon and Gotch, 1884: 81.

campaign invoked by Britain's humanitarian and missionary pressure groups against New Guinea being placed under Queensland's authority. The central accusation of this collective was that Mcllwraith had been solely motivated to take possession of the Island to secure Papuan labour for Queensland's labour-depleted sugar industry.

The principal reason conventionally advanced for Mcllwraith instructing H.M. Chester, the Government's Resident Police Magistrate on Thursday Island to proceed to Port Moresby and formally take possession of the eastern half of New Guinea on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 1883, was the imminent 'probability of the Island being taken possession of by a foreign power.'<sup>24</sup> The evidential basis for this perception of Germany's annexationist ambitions in New Guinea rested tenuously on two factors. First, the November 1882 publication of an article entitled 'Newguinea' in the German newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung*, in which the author, Emil Deckert advocated and presented a compelling case for 'the German Government to annex and colonise New Guinea'.<sup>25</sup> Second, the March departure from Sydney of the German corvette the *Carola* whose commission, it was rumoured, entailed the annexation of certain islands in the South Pacific.<sup>26</sup> This seemingly corroborated the annexationist agenda outlined in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* article and thus demonstrated the necessity for immediate and decisive action.<sup>27</sup> Germany, at this point in time, had not devised nor instituted an official

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<sup>24</sup> Mcllwraith to Queensland Governor Sir Arthur Kennedy, 6 April 1883, Queensland Parliament, *Annexation of New Guinea*. Brisbane: Government Printer, 1883-1906: 5.

<sup>25</sup> Frederick Young, Honorary Secretary for Royal Colonial Institute London to Thomas Archer Agent General for Queensland, 13 December 1882, *Ibid*: 2.

<sup>26</sup> In response to Derby's telegram 'What specific information led Government to believe occupation New Guinea by foreign power probable' Palmer claimed 'General rumours of Germany and Italy. Special rumour of German corvette 'Carola' was leaving Sydney for South Seas with the object of annexation.' Lieutenant Governor A.H. Palmer to Lord Derby, 4 June 1883, 'Odd Notes. By a Bohemian', *Week*, 7 July 1883.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Bernays' depiction of the contributing factors to the 1883 annexation of New Guinea was heavily tainted by the events of World War One. Bernays asserts that 'the 'Allgemeine Zeitung' shows clearly that the German of 1883 was the same German of 1914....Looking back now, we may well congratulate ourselves that we had in office in Queensland at a critical period so strong and determined a man as Mcllwraith....We can see only too clearly...what was in the minds of leading colonising Germans of the day, and there is little doubt that the train had at this time already been laid for a great colonising coup with New Guinea as the chief prize.' Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*. 93-94; 'Odd Notes by A Bohemian,' *Week*. 7 July 1883;

colonising policy towards New Guinea and in fact the events consequent to McIlwraith's attempted annexation would prove to be a contributing factor in the activation of Germany's imperialist activities in the region.<sup>28</sup> In contrast the annexation of New Guinea to the Australian colonies, the Colonial Office acknowledged, was 'a question of continually growing importance' with regular petitions sent to the Imperial authorities appealing for protection against impending foreign encroachment.<sup>29</sup>

At spasmodic intervals throughout the 1870s the Australian colonies had urged the Imperial Government to annex the eastern half of New Guinea to secure and protect their expanding and prospective interests in and around the island. Colonial interest in New Guinea had increased in unison with the growth of economic and commercial activity in the Torres Strait. Of particular note was the rapid development of the lucrative northern maritime industries of pearl-shelling and beche-de-mer fishing, the growing importance of the Torres Straits as a shipping route, described in 1876 as 'rapidly becoming the world's highway', and the increasing number of positive scientific reports that described New Guinea's prospective 'natural wealth'.<sup>30</sup> Foreign

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Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea 1870-1885*. 123; Marjorie G. Jacobs, 'Bismarck and the Annexation of New Guinea,' *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 5: 17 (Nov 1951): 14-26.

<sup>28</sup> Lord Derby, in response to the Royal Colonial Institute's letter alerting the Colonial Office to the contents of the *Allgemeine Zeitung* article declared that there was no reason to suppose that the German Government contemplated any move in the direction outlined by the article. Until mid-1884 Germany did not present any indication that it intended to adopt an official policy of colonial expansion. Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea 1870-1885*. 223-44; Jacobs, 'Bismarck and the Annexation of New Guinea,' 14-23.

<sup>29</sup> Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 28 February 1883, Queensland No.3518 Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>30</sup> In 1882, 66,000 tons of shipping moved westward through the Torres Straits from Queensland ports and 56,000 tons moved in the other direction. The continental shelf off the north coast of Australia contained the world's greatest supply of pearl shell and the highest grade. Investment in the industry was estimated to be £40,000 and the annual profits between 1875-1879 averaged £50,000. Beche-de-mer fishing grew alongside pearl shelling and remained a lucrative industry throughout the 1870s and 1880s. In Cooktown £100 per ton was paid for the best species of sea-cucumber or trepang, a delicacy used in Chinese soups and renowned for its supposed aphrodisiac qualities. Quote from A.E. Kennedy, Queensland Governor to Lord Carnarvon Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 May 1876, *Documents and Correspondence Relating to the Alteration of the Maritime Boundary of Queensland in 1879 to Incorporate Certain Islands in Torres Strait*. Canberra: Documents Transcribed From Australian Joint Copying Project Reels 1861-2 and 1930-31: 24-25; Donald C. Gordon, 'Beginnings of an Australian Pacific Policy', *Political Science Quarterly*, 60:1 (March 1945): 79-89; John Bach, 'The Political

activity in what the Australian colonies increasingly saw as their natural sphere of expansion provoked apprehension and prompted appeals throughout the 1870s for New Guinea to be annexed to forestall this foreign encroachment.<sup>31</sup> These 'strong and repeated' appeals for annexation were effectively countered by Britain's 'indisposition to extend her jurisdiction' and by the colonies' unwillingness to contribute financially to the cost of the territory's administration if annexed.<sup>32</sup> Despite Queensland's closer proximity to New Guinea, the colony did not exhibit a pronounced fear of foreign intervention nor fervour for annexation.

In February 1875 Queensland's Governor Cairns informed the Colonial Office that 'little real interest is felt as yet in the destiny of New Guinea by either the Ministry or the outside public of Queensland'.<sup>33</sup> This stance was again confirmed in June 1878 when Governor Kennedy stated that 'my Ministers are decidedly averse to assuming

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Economy of Pearlshelling,' *Economic History Review*, 14 (New Series): 1 (1962): 105-14; Moore, *New Guinea: Crossing Boundaries and History*. 127-28; Thomas Archer, Agent General for Queensland to Lord Derby, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 February 1883; Copy of Minute of Proceedings of the Executive Council on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1875; Mr. Labilliere on the Annexation of New Guinea to Great Britain in 'Correspondence Respecting the Annexation of New Guinea and the Administration of the Protectorate'. 7 April 1874 - 31 August 1883 PRV7192/1/1 QSA; Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea 1870-1885*. 97-102; H.C. Brown, 'Queensland's Annexationist Ambitions In New Guinea 1859-1884', Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1968: 16-45.

<sup>31</sup> The early 1870s exploratory activities of Russia, France and Italy and the rumoured American expedition to examine the eastern shores of New Guinea was the basis of these concerns over foreign intervention in the region. Governor Cairns to Lord Derby, 22 February 1875, 'Correspondence Respecting the Annexation of New Guinea' PRV7192/1/1 QSA; Brown, 'Queensland's Annexationist Ambitions In New Guinea 1859-1884': 17-18.

<sup>32</sup> The colonial refusal to share the financial burden of administration rested on the colonial argument that under the proposed arrangements they would be contributing to the expense but would not gain a voice in the way that New Guinea was governed. Lord Carnarvon countered this argument by asserting that it was the colonies that would materially benefit from the acquisition of New Guinea while the 'taxpayers' of Britain would principally bear the burden of the cost. Robert Herbert put the Colonial Office's position succinctly in August 1875, 'One thing which it will be very desirable to say very distinctly is that if the Australian colonies desire such a step as the annexation of New Guinea, it will be for them to provide the funds.' The British Liberal government's aversion to Imperialism was also a significant factor in forestalling colonial annexation but at this point in time it was the question of cost. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 February 1871 cited in Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea 1870-1885*: 94; Colonial Office Minute, 11 August 1875, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/41 AJCP; Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea to Queensland', 28 February 1883, Queensland No.3518, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>33</sup> An influencing factor in Queensland disinclination was the Imperial Government's aversion to Imperialism for Douglas stressed in his letter to Queensland's Government Agent in Port Moresby William B. Ingham 'Give no encouragement to the idea of the territorial annexation of New Guinea. The Government of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain has no interest in that sort of aggrandisement.' Governor Cairns to Lord Derby, 22 February 1875, 'Correspondence Respecting the Annexation of New Guinea', PRV7192/1/1 QSA; John Douglas to W.B. Ingham, 1 June 1878. 'Miscellaneous Correspondence: 11 January 1861 – 7 March 1939', RSI12848/1/1 QSA.



any responsibility connected with New Guinea.<sup>34</sup> Queensland's reluctance to embark on an expansionist programme in New Guinea at this time rested on the fact the reports that it possessed 'great mineral wealth' and fertile soil were unsubstantiated, and second, that the colony still had its own vast tracts of more accessible territory in the north to develop.<sup>35</sup> Queensland's focus was more proximate and centred on the Torres Strait in alignment with the colony's expanding maritime industries.

In 1877 the Imperial Government's initiative to extend Queensland's maritime boundary ostensibly remedied the colony's strategic concerns that 'the establishment of the authority of any Foreign State upon her water frontier would be nothing less than a permanent disaster'.<sup>36</sup> Additionally it would improve the administrative difficulties of policing the activities of the 'somewhat doubtful characters' that operated outside the colony's 60 nautical mile jurisdictional boundary established in 1872.<sup>37</sup> The extension gazetted in July 1879<sup>38</sup>, after 'much shilly-shallying' between the Imperial Government and Queensland, annexed to Queensland the islands of

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<sup>34</sup> Governor Kennedy to Sir M. Hicks Beach, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 June 1878, *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Queensland's Agent General, Thomas Archer in a paper presented to the Royal Colonial Institute in April 1881 argued that 'the resources of Queensland cannot be considered one-tenth part developed.' News that the naturalist Andrew Goldie had discovered gold, in the Laloki district fifty miles from Port Moresby, in October 1877 instigated a temporarily shift in Queensland's reluctance to pursue a colonising policy. The failure of Goldie's discovery to produce payable quantities of gold resulted in the withdrawal of the Government's support for further development in New Guinea. Quote from Governor Cairns to Lord Derby, 22 February 1875, 'Correspondence Respecting the Annexation of New Guinea', PRV7192/1/1 QSA; Archer, 'Queensland: Her History, Resources, and Future Prospects,' 274; Brown, 'Queensland's Annexationist Ambitions In New Guinea 1859-1884': 32-41.

<sup>36</sup> The mid-1876 rumour that a French expedition to New Guinea had received official approval was the provocation for the Imperial Government's proposal to extend Queensland's maritime boundary for this would assert Britain's priority of claim and ward off foreign interest. Lord Carnarvon instructed the Foreign Office to inform the French president that 'the delay in this country in taking steps with regard to the settlement of New Guinea is not to be regarded as waiving any portion of the claim which discovery, proximity to Australia and the recent operations of British subjects may have established.' The French Government assured Britain that no expedition was contemplated. The alternative proposal of annexing the eastern portion of New Guinea was dismissed because the Australian colonies had previously indicated their unwillingness to contribute financially. John Douglas, Memorandum for His Excellency the Governor, 27 December 1877, *Documents and Correspondence Relating to the Alteration of the Maritime Boundary of Queensland in 1879*: 33.

<sup>37</sup> The Imperial Government opened negotiations with Queensland in January 1877. Governor Cairns to Lord Derby, 22 February 1875, 'Correspondence Respecting the Annexation of New Guinea', PRV7192/1/1 QSA; John Douglas, 'Maritime Boundary of Queensland,' *Queensland Geographical Journal*, 19 (1903-1904): 32-36; Marjorie G. Jacobs, 'The Colonial Office and New Guinea, 1874-1884,' *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 5: 18 (May 1952): 110-11.

<sup>38</sup> The Letters Patent Queensland (New Maritime Boundary) was incorporated into *Queensland Coast Islands Act* in July 1879 and became effective from 1 August 1879.

Tuan, Saibai, Talbot, and Deliverance near the coast of New Guinea, and other islands lying in the Torres Straits.<sup>39</sup> Queensland was as a consequence granted the full responsibility of governing these islands and their 'native' inhabitants and additionally, as John Douglas declared, the colony now 'commanded the passage of Torres Straits'.<sup>40</sup> Yet this extension of Queensland's boundary cannot be classified as Queensland's entrée into imperialism. The impetus for this extension had come from the Imperial Government and notably the Colonial Office had professed the view that 'there cannot be any objection to annexing the Islands in question to Queensland.'<sup>41</sup> But by 1883 simultaneous but opposing developments had brought about a significant change in attitude.

In 1880, the new British Liberal Government of William Gladstone adopted a resolute policy of anti-imperialism.<sup>42</sup> Central to this overt opposition to territorial annexation was an abhorrence of the negative impact that colonisation had had on Indigenous populations. Lord Selborne, Lord Chancellor in Gladstone's Ministry and ardent supporter of the anti-imperialist policy reflected that he 'detested, as a disgrace to the

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<sup>39</sup> In the final phase of these deliberations the Queensland Government purchased the schooner the *Pearl* 'at a very fair, or even low, price, with the intention of sending her out there should the Bill pass. She would be manned and armed sufficiently to enforce law and order.' The *Pearl* would in four years be employed to transfer Chester to Port Moresby for the formal annexation of New Guinea initiated by McIlwraith. The expense incurred in manning the *Pearl* and in the fulfilment of Queensland's obligations under the arrangement were to be offset by the income collected at Thursday Islands Customs Port. Queensland (New Maritime Boundary) Draft of Letters Patent, 16 July 1878; McIlwraith, 'Queensland Coast Islands Bill - Second Reading', Queensland Legislative Assembly 20 May 1879, *Documents and Correspondence Relating to the Alteration of the Maritime Boundary of Queensland in 1879*: 55-57, 58-60; Jacobs, 'The Colonial Office and New Guinea':110-11.

<sup>40</sup> John Douglas, 'Coastal Islands Bill – Committee', *Documents and Correspondence Relating to the Alteration of the Maritime Boundary of Queensland in 1879*: 68-69.

<sup>41</sup> McIlwraith advanced the 'repression of violence on the part of the natives and for the enforcement of the law on the many peoples of all nations congregating on those islands' was an additional function of the extension. McIlwraith, 'Queensland Coast Islands Bill- Second Reading', 20 May 1879 and R. Mercer, Colonial Office Minute, 26 March 1878, *Documents and Correspondence Relating to the Alteration of the Maritime Boundary of Queensland in 1879*: 38, 58-60.

<sup>42</sup> Prior to 1880 Britain had presented an 'indisposition to extend her jurisdiction' under Gladstone this developed into a dedicated aversion to imperialistic endeavours. Supportive of Gladstone's anti-annexationist policy were the senior members of his cabinet and key personal such as the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Derby and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Granville, and missionary and humanitarian pressure groups. Under this policy the 'growth' of annexationist's ambitions by the colonies was to be actively 'retarded...as much as possible.' Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea to Queensland', 28 February 1883, Queensland No.8239, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

Christian name, the cruelty and oppression by which, in too many cases, the path of civilisation has been stained.’<sup>43</sup> Informing and fortifying this policy was the expanding missionary activity in the Pacific and the allied development of public campaigns by humanitarian pressure groups such as the Aboriginal Protection Society. A fundamental concern of these bodies was the ongoing subjection of Islanders to the activities of labour recruiters. The Presbyterian Missionaries had outlined their objective in 1871:

Our aim is not to have the traffic regulated, to have its grosser abuses remain, but to have it abolished, to have the evil removed, the root as well as the branch. Our distinct aim is to have it abolished by an Act of the Imperial Parliament.<sup>44</sup>

In combination the anti-Imperialist Liberals and the various church organisations were recognised as ‘that powerful party known in England as “Exeter Hall”’.<sup>45</sup> It was critically argued of this collective that:

In all their public acts and words they follow out the theory that the natives of the Pacific are mild, innocent savages, and all white traders and sailors in the Seas murdering wretches. The poor natives must be protected.<sup>46</sup>

In the early 1880s this campaign against the labour trade in the Pacific intensified. The provocation for this was the onset in Queensland of the sugar industry’s explosive phase of expansion and its accordant upsurge in demand for indentured coloured labour. Increased recruiting activity in the Pacific to supply the growing needs of planters was the offensive outcome. In the ensuing critical press campaign, Queensland was censured for its role in the expansion of this ‘thinly disguised slavery’.<sup>47</sup> Queensland had by 1883 ‘certainly acquired a bad name’ and the broader

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<sup>43</sup> Quote cited in Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 146.

<sup>44</sup> *Maryborough Chronicle*, 23 February 1871 cited in Kay Saunders, *Workers in Bondage: The Origins and Bases of Unfree Labour in Queensland 1824-1916*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982: 28.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Vagabond’, ‘South Sea Massacres’, *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 11 December 1880, ‘Outrages in the Islands of the Pacific’, *JLC*, 31:2 (1882): 893.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Wisker, ‘Troubles in the Pacific,’ 711-34.

significance of this would be played out in the Imperial authorities consideration of McIlwraith's annexation action.<sup>48</sup>

Although McIlwraith had submitted that his principal motivation for the pre-emptive annexation of New Guinea was the strategic threat posed by Germany's colonising ambitions, this 'startling' action by Queensland was at once viewed, in 'certain influential quarters', with suspicion.<sup>49</sup> The central component to this suspicion was the Imperial belief the purported threat from Germany was unlikely. Britain had developed a fixed idea that Bismarck had no colonising ambitions and this had been reinforced by the reports of the British Ambassador in Berlin Lord Ampthill.<sup>50</sup> Therefore in alignment with Queensland's 'bad reputation', concerns were immediately raised over the colony's motives for annexing a territory that contained 'a large black population'.<sup>51</sup> Queensland's action was seen to be problematic on two grounds. First, based on the historical account of the colony's 'scandalous' treatment of coloured races, Queensland was judged not to have 'qualified particularly well' to assume the administrative responsibilities of governing the inhabitants of New Guinea.<sup>52</sup> The London Missionary Society's Reverend W.G. Lawes stationed at Port Moresby put the case more forcefully:

There must be some mistake somewhere....Nowhere in the world have aborigines been so basely and cruelly treated as in Queensland – the half has never been told – and are the natives of New Guinea to be handed over to the tender mercies of the men who have done these deeds?<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> W.H. Mercer, Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 14 May 1883, Queensland No.8239, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>49</sup> The 'certain influential quarters' was an indirect reference to the ardent supports of Gladstone's anti-imperialistic policy listed above and a notable addition to this collective was Sir Arthur Gordon. R. Murray-Smith, 'The Australian Dominion,' *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, 15 (1883-84): 112; 'English and Foreign News. From the London Letter to the Melbourne *Argus*', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>50</sup> Gordon, *Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 233-34.

<sup>51</sup> 'English and Foreign News', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883; Colonial Office Minute 'Annexation of New Guinea', 14 May 1883, Queensland No.8239, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>52</sup> F. Fuller, 16 May 1883, *Ibid*.

<sup>53</sup> Rev. W. G. Lawes, to unknown, 7 April 1883 cited in Richard Lovett, *James Chalmers: His Autobiography and Letters. Fifth Edition*. London: The Religious Tract Society, 1903: 237-38.

Alternatively, the Colonial Office's Chief Clerk W. Mercer speculated that:

In dealing with so large a native population, the colony will probably be more careful than it has been at home, for the sake of its own future, to study moderation and prudence, and to listen to any directions which may be given by Her Majesty's Government.<sup>54</sup>

The second and more provocative concern was based on Queensland's defiant maintenance of a coloured labour force or more specifically the sugar industry's escalating labour problems. It was therefore associatively argued that the annexation of New Guinea was a determined action taken by Queensland 'in order to supply her sugar plantations with Papuan labour'.<sup>55</sup> Three pieces of circumstantial evidence allegedly supported this contention. First, the *Allgemeine Zeitung* article was dismissed as 'a merely speculative theory of the writer without authoritative sanction from the German Government' and therefore seemingly insufficient to induce German colonisation of New Guinea. Second, the general belief that Queensland was 'untrustworthy'<sup>56</sup> and third, Queensland planters had approached the missionaries in New Guinea in early 1883 asking 'Can we get men in New Guinea to work for us here in North Queensland?'<sup>57</sup>

In response to the planters' letter, the London Missionary Society's Samuel MacFarlane at Murray Island and W.G. Lawes at Port Moresby depicted the state of play in New Guinea. They reported the 'natives' had experienced only sporadic contact with Europeans and were either 'a wild and treacherous people' or 'more

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<sup>54</sup> W.H. Mercer, 15 May 1883, Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 14 May 1883, Queensland No.8239, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>55</sup> 'Old Country News', *Queenslander*, 21 July 1883.

<sup>56</sup> In a letter to Lord Derby, dated the 19th May 1883 Prime Minister Gladstone declared: 'I hope we find ourselves in a condition utterly to quash this annexation effected by Queensland on her sole authority, for I suppose her to be untrustworthy as well as unauthorised.' H.C.G. Matthew, (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries with Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence. Volume 10*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990: 435 - 50.

<sup>57</sup> W.G. Lawes, 'Settling of New Guinea', Letter to the Editor dated 2 February, *Queenslander*, 31 March 1883; also printed in the Liberal paper *Week*, 31 March 1883.

tractable' but 'unwilling to leave home'.<sup>58</sup> MacFarlane concluded that 'as to your immediate prospects in New Guinea, I fear the play will not be worth the candle....I cannot therefore advise you to risk any expenditure in attempting at present to get labour from New Guinea.'<sup>59</sup> Lawes emphasised the Papuans aversion to be 'out of sight of their own land' and therefore stressed: 'Let it be clearly understood that no natives are likely to be obtained here as honourable men should get them.'<sup>60</sup> MacFarlane and Lawes' personal depiction of the precarious nature of Papuan/European contact served to reinforce the anecdotal reports detailed in the recurrent newspaper accounts commonly entitled 'Massacre in New Guinea'.<sup>61</sup>

Yet, it was argued that despite these 'discouraging' letters from MacFarlane and Lawes the planters continued to proceed with the labour proposal and solicited McIlwraith to facilitate the annexation of the territory so as to provide a 'fresh field for recruiting native labour'.<sup>62</sup> Beyond the assurance of the *Times*' correspondent in Sydney, that 'the labour question has no bearing on the annexation' or the more abrupt dismissal of the idea as 'an absurdity', the context in which the annexation of

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<sup>58</sup> Lawes' more extended reference stated that 'the character which this coast bore for cruelty and savagery was deserved though exaggerated. Their greatest honour and glory was murder. The tattoo marks on the chests of the men show how proud they were of what should have been their shame, for these are the medals of honour worn only by those who have shed human blood.' W.G. Lawes, 'Settling of New Guinea', *Queenslander* 31 March 1883; S. MacFarlane to Wide Bay Farmers and Planters Association, 14 February 1883 cited in Edward Wybergh Docker, *The Blackbirders: The Recruiting of South Seas Labour for Queensland, 1863-1907*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1970: 172.

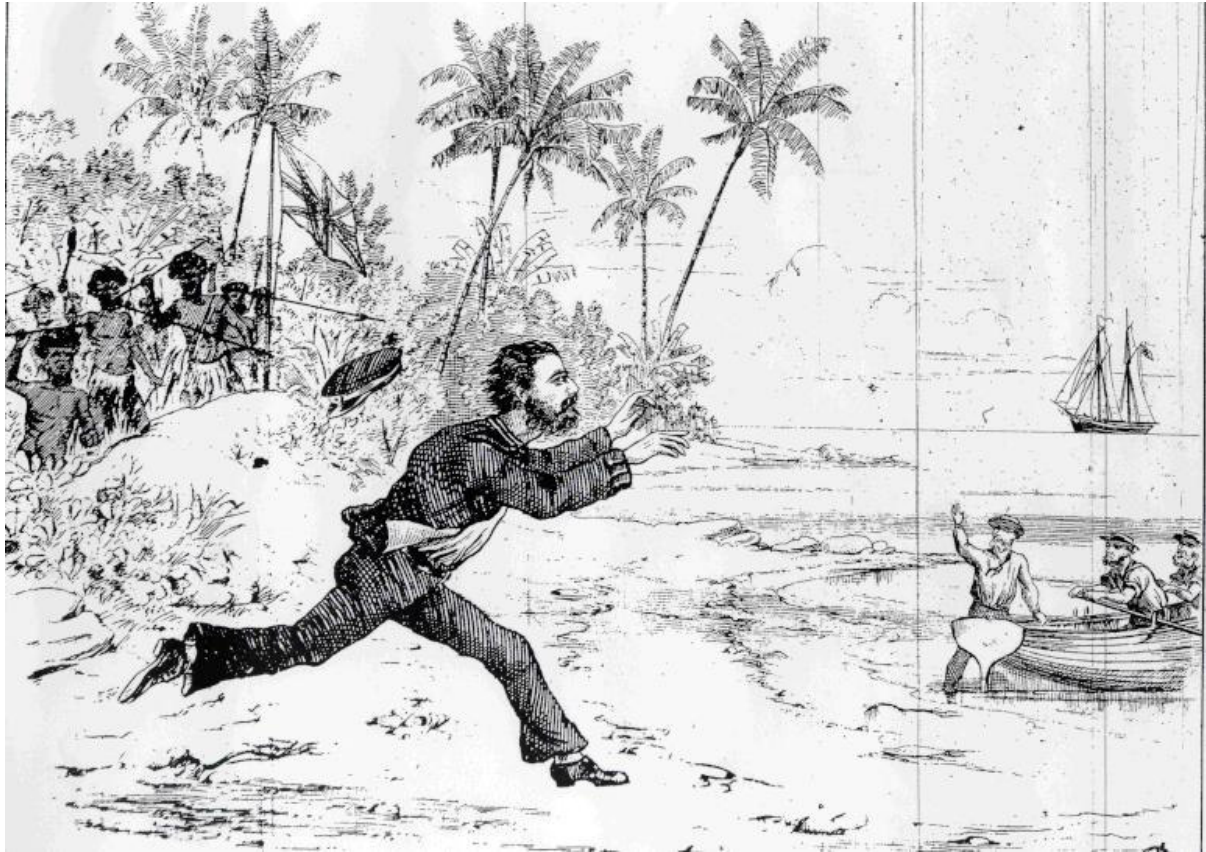
<sup>59</sup> MacFarlane to Wide Bay Farmers and Planters Association, 14 February 1883 cited in *Ibid*.

<sup>60</sup> W.G. Lawes, 'Settling of New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 31 March 1883.

<sup>61</sup> At an 1881 Inter-Colonial Conference Queensland's representative Arthur Palmer referred to the 'lamentable state of affairs existing between the natives...and the subjects of Her Majesty trading in those seas'. In the first three months of 1881 the *Queenslander* ran five articles, 'Account of Massacre of Crew of Schooner 'Prosperity' at New Guinea'; 'Massacre of Captain and White Crew of 'Annie Brooks' by Brooker Island Natives; 'Capture of Chinese Junk in New Guinea and Murder of Her Crew', and two entitled 'Massacre in New Guinea'. *Queenslander*, 13 January, 4 February and 23, 31 March 1883.

<sup>62</sup> 'The Premier's Blunder', *Week*, 14 July 1883; Wilfred Powell, 'New Guinea and the Western Pacific,' *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, 15 (November 1883): 7-38. Wilfred Powell was described as 'the only traveller' who had visited the northern coast of New Guinea.' Coutts Trotter, 'New Guinea,' *Nineteenth Century*, 14: 77 (July 1883): 101-08.

New Guinea took place challenges the accuracy, in contemporary and historical accounts, of the labour recruitment theory.<sup>63</sup>



**WE ANNEX NEW GUINEA.**

**Figure 3.1: *Queensland Punch*, 1 May 1883**

In January 1886 the Queensland's Governor Sir Anthony Musgrave view on the matter was that 'not much doubt is entertained by those who know most about the matter that the annexation of New Guinea was intended to supply black labour.'<sup>64</sup> Recent historical interpretation has sustained this view of McIlwraith's principal motivation. Roger Thompson, for example, argued that the 'real explanation' for the annexation was the 'potential value of New Guinea and its nearby islands as a

<sup>63</sup> 'New Guinea', *Times*, 20 April 1883; Powell, 'New Guinea and the Western Pacific':15.

<sup>64</sup> Governor Musgrave to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 January 1886, 'Letterbooks of Confidential Despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Volume 1. 29 January 1868 - 7 June 1892', .

source of labour.’<sup>65</sup> Most recently the Pacific historian Clive Moore advanced that Queensland’s bid to control the eastern half of New Guinea ‘had as a primary motivation the desire to monopolise this huge labour supply.’<sup>66</sup> But these historical accounts have considered the annexation in isolation of the broader Queensland political context. Key factors in Queensland’s prevailing political environment, introduce alternative contentions to the question of whether labour recruitment was the foremost or sole motivation.

In line with McIlwraith’s ‘bold, prompt and masterful’ style of leadership, the annexation of New Guinea was depicted in London as ‘a stroke of policy that will be likely to take rank amid the boldest acts of the kind ever done by a young community’.<sup>67</sup> The Sydney *Bulletin* declared that ‘the annexation of New Guinea by the Queensland Premier is certainly the most remarkable event which has occurred on this side of the equator during the last score of years’.<sup>68</sup> McIlwraith’s action was quite unmistakably an ‘overt act’ that attracted significant public interest and scrutiny.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, as the annexation was unprecedented and unauthorised, the Imperial Government’s sanction of the action was a mandatory requirement. It would therefore seem extraordinary that McIlwraith, while fully alert to the increasing and authoritative campaign against the recruitment of Island labourers, would have chosen such a dramatic course of action based on an exceptionally vulnerable motive. It would seem certain that within this unfavourable context the issue of

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<sup>65</sup> Thompson acknowledged that this motive was disavowed by McIlwraith and by most historians. Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific*: 55.

<sup>66</sup> Moore, *New Guinea: Crossing Boundaries and History*: 145.

<sup>67</sup> Satge, *Pages From the Journal of a Queensland Squatter*. 247; ‘Editorial’, *Times*, 17 April 1883.

<sup>68</sup> ‘New Guinea Annexation’, *Bulletin*, 28 April 1883.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Brisbane Courier*, 19 April 1883.



Queensland's coloured labour policy would be raised.<sup>70</sup> McIlwraith's awareness of the oppositional influence of 'the philanthropic party in England' was apparent in his telegram to the other Australian Colonies appealing for support 'as I fear undue pressure upon Imperial Government to repudiate the annexation of New Guinea.'<sup>71</sup>

The *Week* alternatively drew a different hypothesis from the mounting Imperial pressure on Queensland. In late March 1883 it declared that 'this annexation business is mystifying in the highest degree' and due to 'the utter absence of definite information' it proceeded to postulate McIlwraith's motivation. The paper theorised that because the Royal Commission indicated the 'immediate interference' by the Imperial authorities into the Pacific Island labour traffic, sugar planters had 'prevailed upon' McIlwraith to annex New Guinea. The essential premise of the *Week's* argument was that if New Guinea was within Queensland's jurisdiction 'no new law nor regulation will be needed to move aborigines from one part of Queensland to another' and therefore 'it will be easy enough to get an ample supply of natives to come down'.<sup>72</sup> While it seems doubtful that the pressure brought to bear on McIlwraith, by sections of the planter collective, would have been sufficient to induce such a radical undertaking,<sup>73</sup> the supposition that the act of annexation would ease the path for recruitment was flawed. Queensland's Lieutenant Governor Arthur Palmer's telegram in response to Lord Derby's enquiry whether recruitment vessels had departed for New Guinea, asserted that 'if annexation confirmed cannot recruit

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<sup>70</sup> Queensland's Agent-General Thomas Archer in a private letter to McIlwraith dated 7<sup>th</sup> March 1883 Archer asserted that this Committee would 'block our annexation plans if they can'. Archer to McIlwraith, 7 March 1883, letter no.599, McIlwraith Papers, OM64/19/18.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Archer in a private letter to McIlwraith confirmed that a negative influence would be brought to bear on the Imperial government's decision for he feared that the British Cabinet 'won't be influenced in our favour.' 'New Guinea and Queensland', *Brisbane Courier*, 13 February 1886; McIlwraith to the Premiers of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, 18 April 1883 cited in Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*. 94; Archer to McIlwraith, 7 March 1883, Letter No.599, 'McIlwraith Papers, OM64/19/18.

<sup>72</sup> 'The Annexation of New Guinea', *Week*, 31 March 1883.

<sup>73</sup> No written record was located that indicates or supports this purported pressure on McIlwraith.

there – see Pacific Island Labourers Act – Recruiting in New Guinea would require new legislation.’<sup>74</sup> The Colonial Office confirmed this assessment of the situation.<sup>75</sup> The pertinent section of the *Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880* was the ‘Definition of Terms’, which outlined that recruitment was prohibited from Islands within ‘Her Majesty’s dominions’.<sup>76</sup> As the eastern half of New Guinea was not in the possession of any civilised power there existed no legal mechanism that prevented recruitment from within New Guinea or its nearby islands. The advancement of recruiting vessels into the New Guinea region from February 1883, prompted by the success of the Fijian recruiter, *Lord of the Isles*, which had recruited 178 Islanders from New Britain within a few days, was therefore neither illegal nor untoward.<sup>77</sup> Yet it was the entrance of Queensland’s labour recruiters into the Bismarck Archipelago, northeast of the New Guinea mainland, which was seized upon as the tangible evidence that confirmed and therefore exposed Queensland’s darker motivation.

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<sup>74</sup> The Council of the Royal Colonial Institute stressed this point to Lord Derby in a meeting 1<sup>st</sup> June 1883: ‘As to the suggestion that Queenslanders might be inclined to establish slavery in the island, they pointed out that the occupation had effectually prevented that.’ Palmer to Derby, 4 June 1883, Colonial Office Minute, ‘Recruiting of Labourers from New Guinea’, Queensland No.9242, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP; ‘The Occupation of New Guinea’ London *Standard*, 2 June 1883 cited in Colonial Office, 25 May 1883, Queensland Minute No. 8922, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>75</sup> Colonial Office Minute, ‘Recruiting of Labourers from New Guinea’, Queensland No.9242, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>76</sup> *Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880*, Queensland Parliament, *Imperial and Colonial Acts Relating to the Recruiting, etc., of Pacific Labourers: and Regulations Made Thereunder; Together with Instructions for the Guidance of Government Agents Appointed to Accompany Vessels Licensed to Carry Pacific Islanders*. Brisbane: Government Printer, 1892: 23.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Corris, ‘Blackbirding’ in New Guinea Waters, 1883-84,’ *Journal of Pacific History*, 13 (1968): 85-105; Docker, *The Blackbirders*: 168.

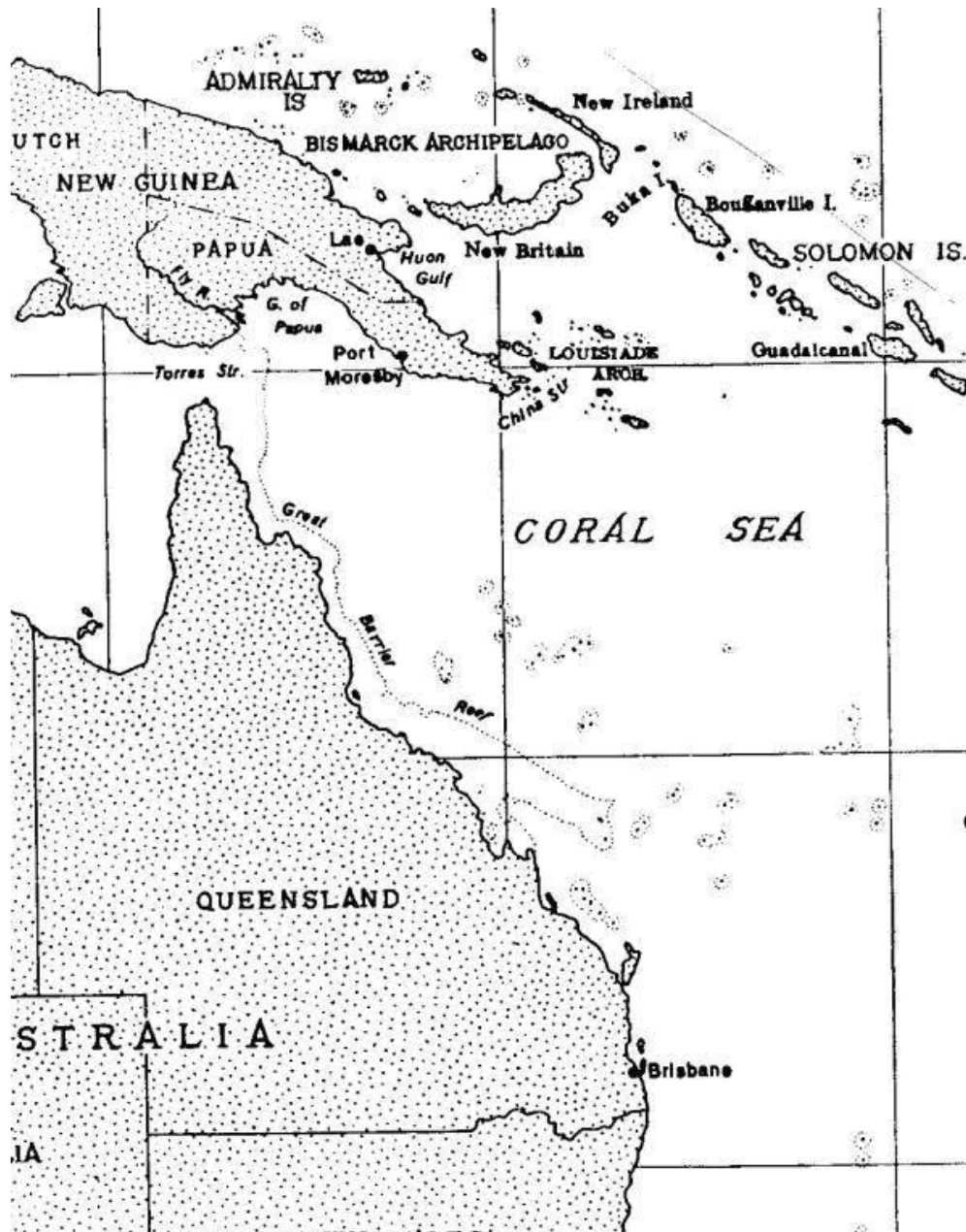


Figure 3.2: Map showing proximity of Bismarck Archipelago.<sup>78</sup>

Concerns, by those opposed to coloured labour, peaked with news that the recruiter vessel the *Hopeful* had departed Townsville on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1883 with the vaguely described destination of the South Seas and the reports that four more vessels had departed Queensland in March. The swift return of these vessels, from the Bismarck Archipelago within three months carrying a combined total of 529 recruits, was

<sup>78</sup> Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea, 1870-1885*.

advanced as the tangible evidence of Queensland's ulterior motive.<sup>79</sup> The *Mackay Mercury* argued that, 'considering that the labour traffic has been in existence now for many years, the sudden state of fright exhibited about New Guinea is almost amusing.'<sup>80</sup> McIlwraith more forcefully refuted the 'allusion' that Queensland desired New Guinea as a 'facility' to obtain a large supply of coloured labour: 'On behalf of the Colony I deny that we have been actuated by any such motive; nor was there the slightest ground for believing the statement'.<sup>81</sup> Despite McIlwraith's assertion corroborative evidence of the Queensland Government's nefarious intent has historically been located in the reply sent by Queensland's Lieutenant Governor, Sir Arthur Palmer, in response to the Imperial Government's enquiry on recruitment activity in New Guinea.

On the 4th June Palmer cabled a reply to Lord Derby: 'Cannot ascertain that any labour ships have gone to New Guinea clear for South Sea Islands only; No labourers have come from New Guinea'.<sup>82</sup> Yet, on the 21<sup>st</sup> May the *Hopeful* had returned to Townsville with 102 recruits from the New Britain and Duke of York Islands in the Bismarck Archipelago. The return of the *Hopeful* has been advanced as the evidence that contradicts Palmer's claim that no Papuan recruits had entered

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<sup>79</sup> The vessels that departed in March were the *Fanny* from Mackay, the *Stanley* from Maryborough, and the *Jessie Kelly* and the *Lord of the Isles* from Brisbane. A typical timeframe for a recruiting voyage in the established recruiting grounds of the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides was six months. The *Stanley* was wrecked on the 1st June 1883 and caused the death of 12 of the 90 recruits. The surviving Islanders were transferred onto the *Venture*. The *Hopeful* had it was later revealed, resorted to kidnapping and this in conjunction with the widespread adoption of nefarious methods of recruitment practiced on the subsequent voyages of the *Hopeful* and other recruiting vessels intensified opinion against Queensland, and lead to a much publicised trial and conviction of members of the *Hopeful*, a Royal Commission and in 1884 enforced the closure of New Guinea region to recruitment. 'Return Showing Pacific Island Labourers Introduced Into Queensland', *JLC*, 34:1:256-259; Docker, *The Blackbirders*: 175-179; C.R. Moore, 'Queensland's Annexation of New Guinea in 1883,' *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 12: 1 (1984): 26-54; Corris, 'Blackbirding' in New Guinea Waters, 1883-84,' 85-93.

<sup>80</sup> 'Local News', *Mackay Mercury*, 28 April 1883.

<sup>81</sup> McIlwraith never wavered on his assertion that the annexation was act of self-defence and consistently denied the labour recruitment motivation. McIlwraith to Lord Derby, 28 September 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of The Federal Council of Australasia*. Volume 1. Hobart: William Thomas Strutt, Government Printer, 1886: 40-41.

<sup>82</sup> Palmer to Lord Derby, 4 June 1883, Queensland Parliament, *Coloured Labour in Queensland*. Vol. 2.

Queensland.<sup>83</sup> Under Queensland's notification system, the captain of a labour vessel was required by law to immediately submit a report to the local Immigration Agent detailing the number and origin of each recruit. These details were first telegraphed and then shipped onto the Brisbane-based Immigration Department. That Palmer did not acknowledge this information in his cable, sent two weeks after the *Hopeful* had returned, has been taken to mean that he was 'either misled or at worst lying'.<sup>84</sup> But two points should be considered that introduce a degree of ambiguity.

First, Derby's telegram specifically sought information on the validity of the reports 'in the English newspapers that a vessel had left Mackay for New Guinea to obtain labour.'<sup>85</sup> Accordingly, Queensland's Under Colonial Secretary Robert Gray telegraphed A.R. MacDonald, Mackay's Inspector of Pacific Islanders: 'Have any vessels left Mackay or other port with the avowed intention of recruiting Islanders.'<sup>86</sup> MacDonald replied that no vessel had been cleared from Mackay for New Guinea and presented a sketchy report of the recruitment activity of the *Fanny* and the *Hopeful* in the Bismarck Archipelago.<sup>87</sup> Second, Palmer's non-inclusion of this activity in his reply indicated that he had interpreted 'New Guinea' as a literal reference only to the New Guinea mainland. This literal definition of New Guinea was a manifest feature of McIlwraith's 1888 claim that while he was premier 'everyone was given to understand, and did understand...that no ships were to recruit *in* New Guinea, and

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<sup>83</sup> 'Return Showing Pacific Island Labourers Introduced Into Queensland', *JLC*, 34:1:256-259; Moore, 'Queensland's Annexation of New Guinea in 1883': 43.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Derby to Palmer, 30 May 1883, Colonial Office Minute, 'Recruiting of Labourers from New Guinea', Queensland No.9242, Queensland Original Correspondence, Co234/43 AJCP.

<sup>86</sup> Gray to MacDonald, 31 May 1883, *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> The *Hopeful* had apparently reported on its return to Townsville that it had seen the *Fanny* near New Britain. MacDonald to Gray, 1 June 1883, *Ibid.*

as a matter of fact up to the time I left office no ship did recruit *in* New Guinea'.<sup>88</sup> Returns for this period show that 749 Islanders had been recruited from the Bismarck Archipelago.<sup>89</sup> Mcllwraith quite clearly did not identify this group of Islands as New Guinea. The interchangeable use by the Colonial Office of the terms 'the Island' or 'the island of New Guinea' verifies the use of this definition as an accepted term of reference and not as a creative or tactical device to avoid the labour recruitment charge.<sup>90</sup>

An additional feature that qualifies the labour recruitment argument was Mcllwraith's continued advocacy of Indian Coolie labour, despite the mounting campaign against the proposal, as his preferred solution to the sugar industry's labour problems.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, Mcllwraith anticipated the end of labour recruitment in the Pacific once 'Coolies' had been introduced. The London Missionary's Society's James Chalmers, reported that he found Mcllwraith, in a June 1883 interview, to be 'a stubborn, good, honest Scotchman, anxious that justice should be done, and willing, if coolies could be obtained, that the labour traffic in natives should be stopped.'<sup>92</sup> An intriguing aspect of the debate over Mcllwraith's allegedly ulterior motivation to annex New Guinea to supply Queensland's sugar planters with labour is that there does not appear to exist any substantiative evidence beyond speculation. In fact no evidence has been located that contradicts Mcllwraith's statement. Yet undeniably the

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<sup>88</sup> Mcllwraith, 'Address in Reply', 15 August 1888, *QPD*, 5 (1888): 26. Italics added.

<sup>89</sup> 'Return Showing Pacific Island Labourers Introduced Into Queensland', *JLC*, 34:1:256-259.

<sup>90</sup> Colonial Office Minutes, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 28 February 1883; 'Annexation of New Guinea', 24 April 1883; 'New Guinea' 25 May 1883, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>91</sup> Correspondence between Queensland and the Indian Government had continued and the Governor's Opening Speech in June notified Parliament that Mcllwraith had framed Regulations that would meet the views of the Indian government and would safeguard against 'injurious' competition between Coolies and European labour and these were to be 'submitted for your approval' and if adopted the labour wants of the Colony being thus adequately supplemented, a happy solution of the embarrassing questions arising out the employment of Pacific Islanders...will have been provided.' Sir Arthur Kennedy, 'Opening Speech', 26 June 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 2.

<sup>92</sup> James Chalmers to unknown, 25 June 1883 cited in Lovett, *James Chalmers: His Autobiography and Letters*. Fifth Edition. 240.

‘mystifying’ aspects of Mcllwraith’s action in conjunction with Queensland’s ‘bad reputation’ and the advent of recruiting in New Guinea waters did provide ample scope for conjecture. Arguably a more plausible rationale for Mcllwraith’s course of action can be found in his tenuous political position.

By early 1883 it was evident that Mcllwraith’s political standing was precarious. The *Queenslander*, a pro-Mcllwraith paper acknowledged that the life of his Ministry was ‘near its end’.<sup>93</sup> In view of Mcllwraith’s deteriorating political position, it can be feasibly argued that his ‘high-handed and precipitate’ annexation of New Guinea, was undertaken for the reasons advanced by Sir Henry Parkes:

The Queensland Minister acted more from a desire to captivate political support by a bold stroke in asserting the importance of that Colony at a time when popular support was certainly needed than from any more enlarged view of the interests of the Empire. But I do not think that there was any design such as I have heard vaguely charged of securing Papuan labour for the Queensland sugar plantations.<sup>94</sup>

Approached from this perspective, a number of the anomalies evident in Mcllwraith’s action become comprehensible. Prominent amongst these was the suddenness and earnestness with which Mcllwraith took up the idea of annexing New Guinea. Within the space of one month Mcllwraith abruptly revived the ‘subject of the annexation of New Guinea’ and carried out the formal annexation itself.<sup>95</sup> That parliament was not sitting at the time was a significant factor that aided Mcllwraith in completing the exploit quickly. Most of his Ministers were absent from Brisbane, and this therefore had presented the politically vulnerable premier with the prospect of acting

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<sup>93</sup> ‘Miles v. Mcllwraith’, *Queenslander*. 10 March 1883.

<sup>94</sup> Parkes to Lord Selbourne, 19 November 1883, ‘Sir Henry Parkes Correspondence: Letters From’, Sydney: Mitchell Library, 11 (A932): 414-17. It is apparent from Parkes’ letter that he had had previous communications with Lord Selbourne on the New Guinea issue, this is particularly notable because Lord Selbourne held the position of Lord Chancellor in Gladstone’s Ministry and was an influential adherent to Gladstone’s anti-Imperialist policy and a vocal opponent of Queensland’s annexation of New Guinea.

<sup>95</sup> Mcllwraith to Governor Kennedy, 26 February 1883, ‘Correspondence Respecting the Annexation of New Guinea’, PRV7192/1/1 QSA.

independently without challenge.<sup>96</sup> In this particular state of affairs Mcllwraith was able to assert that the case advanced by the *Allgemeine Zeitung* article, which urged the German government to annex New Guinea, constituted a legitimate threat and therefore required immediate action.

Alternatively, the Colonial Office and the *Week* dismissed the line of reasoning contained in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* article as being an unofficial and purely speculative thesis.<sup>97</sup> Prior to this it is questionable that the sketchy nature of Germany's intent outlined in the article could be regarded as an 'urgent' and legitimate threat. This remained the case in spite of Queensland's propensity to be alarmed at unconfirmed reports of any foreign activity in the Southwest Pacific and growing colonial interests in the Torres Strait.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, given that Mcllwraith was accredited as being 'the most masterful political leader of the continent', the possibility that he propagated the threat for alternative purposes cannot be discounted.<sup>99</sup> Queensland's particularly heightened fear of outside encroachment, New Guinea's proposed natural wealth and the contemporarily acknowledged 'fiery temperature of the political atmosphere in Queensland', did present a context in which the *Allgemeine Zeitung* article could be used by Mcllwraith as an effective pretext to 'captivate political support by a bold stroke.'<sup>100</sup> The independent manner in

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<sup>96</sup> Mcllwraith had also been absent from Brisbane until mid-February, visiting the southern colonies. Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era 1820-1910*. 51.

<sup>97</sup> Gordon, 'The Australian Frontier in New Guinea': 122-123; 'The Annexation of New Guinea', *Week*, 31 March 1883.

<sup>98</sup> Under Colonial Secretary to Agent General, 27 February 1883, Queensland Parliament, *Annexation of New Guinea*. 4-5.

<sup>99</sup> Alfred Deakin later made this claim in an 1895 article on the subject of the New Guinea annexation and subsequent establishment of the Federal Council. Alfred Deakin (1856-1919) Lawyer, Member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly and a prominent and long-term advocate of federation and the significance of his contribution to the cause is portrayed in his designation as a 'Father of Federation. John Rickard, 'Alfred Deakin', Irving, (ed.), *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*.: 352-53. Alfred Deakin, 'The Federal Council of Australasia,' *Review of Reviews*, (20 February 1895): 155.

<sup>100</sup> 'Editorial', *Mackay Mercury*. 14 March 1883; Parkes to Lord Selbourne, 19 November 1883, 'Sir Henry Parkes Correspondence: Letters From', Sydney: Mitchell Library, 11 (A932): 414-17.



which Mcllwraith radically forced the pace of the annexation upholds this supposition that the action was a calculated and locally determined form of expansionism.

The accelerated pace with which Mcllwraith attempted to force his 'brilliant master-stroke' indirectly conceded that the perceived threat from Germany was unlikely to hold up to the 'mature consideration' of the Imperial authorities.<sup>101</sup> To evade this process Mcllwraith it would seem made an effort to present a *fait accompli*. He instructed the Queensland Agent General Thomas Archer, on the 26<sup>th</sup> February, to urge the Imperial Government to annex New Guinea. These orders were issued on his own counsel and circumvented normal channels of Colonial and Imperial communication.<sup>102</sup> While the appropriate channel through the Governor was also carried out on the 26<sup>th</sup> February, Mcllwraith's mid-March submission to the Executive Council of the annexation question and the resultant decision, 'that an officer of the Queensland Government be at once despatched to New Guinea fully empowered to take possession, in the name of Her Majesty', demonstrated Mcllwraith's haste and disinclination to await Imperial instructions on the matter.<sup>103</sup> Beyond the logistics of sending detailed communications by sea, the Colonial Office's discussion of

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<sup>101</sup> 'The Premier's Blunder', *Week*, 14 July 1883; Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea to Queensland', 28 February 1883, Queensland No.3518, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>102</sup> The Colonial Office made specific mention of this circumvention of the Governor, and stated that 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith holds advanced opinions upon the inability of Governors and seems to be putting them in force.' J. Bramston, Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea to Queensland', 28 February 1883, Queensland No.3518, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>103</sup> Concerns were raised in the House of Commons that Queensland's Governor, due to his 'extreme illness' may not have been present at this Executive Council and this begged the question of on 'whose authority orders were issued for taking possession of New Guinea'. Kennedy was present at this Council meeting yet it is apparent that he was suffering 'from a severe attack of illness' on the 15<sup>th</sup> March. On the same day he wrote to Lord Derby to seek permission to leave Queensland early. His Medical advisors had ordered a long sea voyage 'as the only means of avoiding serious results.' Kennedy died en route for England on the 3rd June 1883. The bearing that his illness had on the New Guinea decision is open only to speculation. Kennedy had expressed his 'entire satisfaction with the action of my Government, especially Sir Thomas Mcllwraith, in the matter'. Mcllwraith's acknowledged persuasive manner in combination with Kennedy's illness may have provided Mcllwraith with a far easier path towards the 'irregularity we have committed' than what would have been possible under Queensland's next Governor Sir Anthony Musgrave. Colonial Office Minute, 23 July 1883, Queensland No.12621, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP; Sir Arthur Kennedy to Lord Derby, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1883, Colonial Office Minute, 'Administration of the Government', 15 March 1883, Queensland No.7369, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP; 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 9 June 1883; 'Extract from the Minute

Mcllwraith's appeal for annexation bears out the likelihood that the consultation phase would be lengthy. The Colonial Office's Permanent Under-Secretary Robert Herbert outlined what the Imperial Government would require to make a decision on such a 'large question of policy'.<sup>104</sup> These were, principally, a fuller explanation of the views and proposals of Queensland, a formal resolution from Queensland's Legislature and the confirmation that no other claims existed over New Guinea.<sup>105</sup> Mcllwraith appears to have sought the authority of the Executive Council at a stage when no new concrete developments had occurred. The movements of German vessels in and out of Australian ports was however being watched with suspicion. On the 19<sup>th</sup> March, four days after the Executive Council's recommendation, it was reported that the German corvette *Carola* had departed Sydney on the 18<sup>th</sup> for the South Seas with the rumoured 'object of annexation' and this presented the viable pretext for immediate action.<sup>106</sup> Mcllwraith, in response and again independently and without consulting the other Australian colonies or the Imperial Government, ordered Chester to 'immediately' proceed to New Guinea and take formal possession.<sup>107</sup> In informing the Governor of what had transpired Mcllwraith was evidently alert to the

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of Proceedings of the Executive Council of Queensland, at Government House, Brisbane, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1883', Queensland Parliament, *Annexation of New Guinea*: 5.

<sup>104</sup> Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea to Queensland', 28 February 1883, Queensland No. 3518, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> No evidence could be found that identifies the exact purpose of the *Carola*'s voyage in the South Pacific. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the *Carola* left Sydney 'for a cruise'. It is clear that the German vessel was in the neighbourhood of the Solomon Islands in early June and at Batavia in early July because, somewhat ironically, it had come to the assistance of the Queensland labour vessel the *Fanny*. Captain Karcher's report outlines that the Captain of the *Fanny* and the Government Agent had been 'wounded by gun shots and throwing spears' when they had attempted to land at Noduf near Cape Stephens in New Britain. Telegram from Palmer to Lord Derby June 1883 cited in *VPD*, 45 (1884): 397; 'Shipping Departures', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 March 1883. Colonial Office Minute, 'Assistance Rendered to the "Fanny" by the German Imperial Vessel "Carola"', 28 September 1883, Queensland No. 16758, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>107</sup> Austin in his article 'Influence of Queensland on Federation' employed Bernays more definite and assertion that the *Carola* had left Sydney with the 'paramount object of annexing New Guinea. There is no concrete evidence to this assertion. Mcllwraith to Robert Gray Colonial Under-Secretary, 19 March 1883, 'Correspondence Respecting the Annexation', PRV7192/1/1 QSA; C.G. Austin, 'Influence of Queensland on Federation,' *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 4: 4 (1951): 509-23; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 94.

fact that his 'summary step' would not be well received in Britain and consequently, in order to establish his position, he urged the Governor to:

impress upon the Secretary of State that the Queensland Government have acted under the full belief that the matter was too urgent to admit of the delay necessarily involved in waiting for instructions from the Imperial Government. As the possession of this valuable territory depended on mere precedence in the formality of annexation, and as the Queensland Government, from information received from various sources, had strong reason to believe in the possibility, and even the probability, of being anticipated in their proposed course of action by a foreign power – a contingency which could not but gravely affect the Australasian Dependencies of Great Britain...– it is hoped that the Secretary of State will perceive that in the step taken by the Queensland Government they have been guided by considerations of expediency, which justify their promptness in taking action in the matter.<sup>108</sup>

Lord Derby outlined the Imperial Government's interpretation of McIlwraith's haste and his irregular course of action:

Considering that telegraphic communication existed between Queensland and this country, it would not have involved a delay of more than 24 hours to have asked for the sanction of the Imperial authorities before proceeding to this act of so-called annexation. If, therefore, the Queensland authorities did not apply for leave it can only be in consequence of their entertaining decided and perhaps, reasonable apprehension that the sanction they asked for would not be granted.<sup>109</sup>

Internally, McIlwraith's Ministers later declared that 'the Premier had done a grand action' and that 'no praise would be too strong to characterise' his role in its accomplishment.<sup>110</sup> Alternatively, Griffith 'doubted' whether McIlwraith's version of the events 'correctly described what had happened.'<sup>111</sup> Open censure of the 'boldness and pluckiness' of McIlwraith's action was largely reserved, as Griffith explained, 'until all the correspondence on the subject had been examined.'<sup>112</sup> As the annexation had been locally received with 'great satisfaction' it would have been impolitic for Griffith to condemn it, particularly before the Imperial Government had

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<sup>108</sup> McIlwraith to Governor Kennedy, 13 April 1883, Queensland Parliament, *Annexation of New Guinea*: 8.

<sup>109</sup> Lord Derby, 'Parliamentary Intelligence: House of Lords, 2 July 1883', *Times*, 3 July 1883.

<sup>110</sup> Maurice Hume Black, 'Address in Reply', 26 June 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 7.

<sup>111</sup> Samuel Griffith, 'Address in Reply', 26 June 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 12.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

announced its verdict.<sup>113</sup> This did not however forestall all attempts to corrode McIlwraith's authority.

Bolstered by a resurgence in his popularity McIlwraith frankly responded to Griffith's accusation that he had 'caught at any pretext to escape' his current 'humiliating' political position, in particular his 'reprehensible' delay in recalling Parliament.<sup>114</sup> McIlwraith cited the annexation as one reason for the delay and went near to acknowledging that he had sought to captivate political and popular support by a bold stroke:

had the House been sitting, and had the hon. gentleman seen an opportunity to damage the Government, he would certainly have weakened the hands of the Government in the course which they adopted. The Government in the action they had taken had, he thought, deserved considerable credit, and that credit they could only have got in the absence of the Opposition party.<sup>115</sup>

That Parliament was not in session had clearly aided McIlwraith, for, as he indicated, it had prevented any interference or delay in his action; secondly and most notably it enabled McIlwraith to evade a fundamental requirement of the Imperial Government, a formal resolution from Queensland's Legislature detailing the colony's case for Imperial action and the Legislature's unanimous support for the annexation.<sup>116</sup> While the Imperial Government had the annexation under consideration, it is plausible that McIlwraith delayed the recall of Parliament to await their decision, for undeniably a favourable response would have further strengthened his political position. Notably, the pro-McIlwraith weekly the *Queenslander*, considered McIlwraith's excuse for the delay as being 'worse than valueless', for as the paper argued 'if he had had any

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<sup>113</sup> 'Queensland News', *Queenslander*, 21 April 1883.

<sup>114</sup> The beginning of May was the traditional time for opening the Parliamentary Session and McIlwraith had not recalled Parliament until the end of June, notably one week before the close of the financial year. Griffith, 'Address in Reply', 26 June 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 11-13.

<sup>115</sup> McIlwraith, 'Address in Reply', 26 June 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 19.

<sup>116</sup> Lord Derby had advised Thomas Archer during their interview on 1<sup>st</sup> March that the 'legislature would have to adopt the necessary resolutions' before the Imperial Government could consider 'so grave a step'. Lord Derby to

reason to anticipate that Parliament would have been opposed to the annexation, he should not have attempted it.’<sup>117</sup> The independent manner in which Mcllwraith had acted was particularly problematic for the *Northern Miner*:

The question looked at from a Queensland point of view presents the saddling of the colony with an unknown and indefinite expenditure; usurping the power and functions of the Parliament, passing by with contempt that body and the people’s representatives and concluding an arrangement of vast importance both to the natives of New Guinea and of Queensland by his own sole will and determination....Representative Government in Queensland has become a hollow sham, a sickly make-believe without hollow or pith. We are under an autocracy and Mcllwraith is exercising power as despotic and uncontrolled as the Czar of Russia.<sup>118</sup>

Overt criticism of the character of Mcllwraith and his Government emerged as a tactical feature of the Opposition’s campaign to counter Mcllwraith’s recovering public appeal. Arnold Weinholt published in April a letter, which the *Mackay Mercury* paraphrased, ‘Sir Thomas is the very worst Premier of the very worst colony in existence.’<sup>119</sup> Griffith’s public and political addresses contained variants on Weinholt’s ‘attack’ and referred to the ‘iniquity’ of the Government or his belief that the ‘eyes of the people had...been opened a great deal wider...to see the Government in their true character.’<sup>120</sup> In July, Griffith reiterated Weinholt’s basic assertion and claimed that ‘Wherever this colony was known the present Government were regarded as the worst in any of the British dominions.’<sup>121</sup> Perceptibly, Griffith had interpreted the ‘deluge of ink’ that had been expended on editorials and news reportage of Mcllwraith’s attempted annexation as unfavourable and therefore depreciative of Queensland. In contrast the *Queenslander* argued that:

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Governor Kennedy, 8 March 1883, ‘Correspondence Respecting the Annexation of New Guinea’, PRV7192/1/1 QSA.

<sup>117</sup> ‘Party Blunders’, *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Northern Miner*, 26 April 1883.

<sup>119</sup> Arnold Weinholt, (1826-1895) Welsh migrant, Squatter and Queensland politician. First elected to the Legislative Assembly as Member for Warwick in June 1863. ‘Editorial’, *Mackay Mercury*, 28 April 1883.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*; Griffith, ‘Address in Reply’, 26 June 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 12; Waterson, *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929*. 191.

<sup>121</sup> Griffith, ‘Summary of Proceedings. Legislative Assembly, 11 July 1883’, *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

We may thank the recent abuse showered on our colony, and the annexation of New Guinea, for the fact that there is now a really quite respectable number of Englishmen who know that there is such a place as Queensland, and that it has a Government of its own.<sup>122</sup>

*Queensland Figaro* also considered the publicity positively and more directly associated it with McIlwraith: 'Barnum retires; McIlwraith takes his place as the boss advertiser of the world. The annexation of New Guinea was the biggest advertisement Queensland ever got. And almost *gratis*.'<sup>123</sup> The rate of private capital investment into Queensland in part corroborates the premise that the exposure engendered by the annexation was economically productive. Between 1881-1885 Queensland attracted £12,500,000, a £9,00,000 increase on the previous five-year period. This was particularly impressive when compared with Victoria's £4,500,000 and New South Wales' £14,500,000 for the 1881-1885 period.<sup>124</sup> From a local perspective, McIlwraith's 'precipitate' annexation of New Guinea did contribute to an upturn in his popular appeal and had associatively 'raised the colony of Queensland in the eyes of the world', but it did not succeed in diverting the Queensland public's 'exceptional interest' in the Transcontinental Railway proposal or the Coolie labour issue.<sup>125</sup> That distraction was the underlying motive for McIlwraith's attempted annexation of New Guinea was the 1884 judgment of the Hon. Charles Dutton:

I maintain that those who attempted to carry out the annexation showed earnestness that I do not believe they felt or actually feel now. It was said at the time perhaps with some truth, that the purpose of that annexation was to divert attention from more important matters nearer home; and I am of the opinion that that had something to do with it.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Joseph King, *W.G. Lawes of Savage Island and New Guinea*. London: The Religious Tract Society, 1909: 205; 'Endymion', 'Light and Shade', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>123</sup> *Queensland Figaro*, 28 April 1883.

<sup>124</sup> T.A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia: From the First Settlement in 1788 to the Establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901*. Volume 4. London: Oxford University Press, 1918: 1408-09.

<sup>125</sup> W.D. Box, 'Federal Council of Australasia', 5 August 1884, *QPD*, 42 (1884): 45; Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 16 June 1883.

<sup>126</sup> Charles Dutton was the Minister for Lands in Griffith's new Ministry. Dutton, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 26 November 1884, *QPD*, 44 (1884): 1584.

In the Imperial arena the mounting moral opposition to Queensland gaining administrative control of New Guinea further diminished these local gains.

McIlwraith's case for annexing New Guinea was a skilful and strategic one. It addressed the major impedient to all previous attempts to solicit Imperial action in New Guinea; the issue of colonial contributions to the expense of administering the territory. McIlwraith informed the Imperial authorities that Queensland was prepared to undertake 'the whole cost of settlement'.<sup>127</sup> This, McIlwraith argued, would 'effectively dispose of the only objection raised on the part of the Home Government, during previous correspondence on the subject, to the annexation of New Guinea by an Australian colony.'<sup>128</sup> Second, McIlwraith re-employed the principal reasons that the Imperial Government had advanced for the 1879 extension of Queensland's maritime boundary, and maintained that these arguments were 'equally cogent toward determining the selection of Queensland as the colony under whose jurisdiction New Guinea should be placed.'<sup>129</sup> Initially, the Colonial Office considered the acquisition of New Guinea as 'a natural event in the development of the colony' and this therefore 'logically' led to the opinion that the annexation of New Guinea to Queensland was the 'best solution of an increasing difficulty'.<sup>130</sup> Edward Drury, the General Manager of the Queensland National Bank visiting London, determined in his private conversation with Colonial Office's Permanent Under-Secretary Robert Herbert that the Colonial Office's position on the annexation was favourable. Drury informed McIlwraith, 'I told him [Herbert] that we should take New Guinea. He said I

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<sup>127</sup> McIlwraith to Governor Kennedy, 26 February 1883, 'Correspondence Respecting the Annexation', PRV7192/1/1 QSA.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> W. Mercer and R. Herbert, Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea to Queensland', 28 February 1883, Queensland No.3518, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/43 AJCP.

believe you will. Did not either seem much concerned about it.'<sup>131</sup> The Imperial stance was however significantly altered by two factors. First the 'rough and ready way' that Mcllwraith had independently proceeded to annex New Guinea without Imperial authorisation.<sup>132</sup> And second, that he had 'astonished the political coteries' of Britain in particular the 'Exeter Hall' group that maintained a resolute policy of anti-imperialism and were strongly opposed to the Pacific Islander labour trade.<sup>133</sup>

On the 3rd July 1883, four months after Chester took possession of the eastern half of New Guinea, Queensland was notified that the British Government had formally refused to sanction the colony's annexation. Britain's Prime Minister, William Gladstone, deemed Mcllwraith's annexation action as 'null in point of law and unwarranted in point of policy'.<sup>134</sup> The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Derby, reiterated Gladstone's line of reasoning and further submitted that the refusal was owing to the cost entailed in administering New Guinea, the sheer size of the island and 'the unknown character' of the country's interior and its inhabitants.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, Queensland's 'apprehension' that a foreign power was intent on occupying New Guinea was ruled to have 'no foundation'.<sup>136</sup>

The colonial reaction to this decision was immediate. After the initial colonial pronouncements of 'general surprise' and 'great dissatisfaction', at the Imperial Government's 'cold refusal' to sanction the annexation of New Guinea, the colonies

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<sup>131</sup> Edward Drury, to Mcllwraith, 20 April 1883, 'Mcllwraith Papers', OM64-19/158.

<sup>132</sup> F. Fuller, 16 May 1883, Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 14 May 1883, Queensland No.8239, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>133</sup> Traill, *Historical Sketch of Queensland. Facsimile Edition.*: 61.

<sup>134</sup> The policy referred to was the Gladstone's Liberal government's general anti-imperialist doctrine. 'The Refusal To Annex New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883; 'Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement', *QPD*, 39 (1883): 89; Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 169.

<sup>135</sup> 'Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement', *QPD*, 39 (1883): 89.

<sup>136</sup> In the House of Commons Gladstone dismissed the foreign occupation fears 'as an apprehension which we have no reason to entertain'; 'House of Commons, 2 July 1883', *Times*, 3 July 1883; Lord Derby, 'House of Lords, 2 July 1883', cited in *Times*, 3 July 1883.



‘energetic expression’ targeted the purported reasons and motives for the decision.<sup>137</sup> Lord Derby’s ‘reasons’ in particular were dismissed as having ‘more show than substance’, for as the Queensland premier asserted they were issues ‘which could easily be got over, and which in fact were got over in the propositions made by Queensland’.<sup>138</sup> With the Imperial Government’s explanation generally rejected the focus of colonial enquiry grew more sceptical and sought to reveal the motivational forces behind the verdict. The section of the Imperial Government’s refusal that came under particular scrutiny was Lord Derby’s assertion that ‘if the Australian colonies desired an extension of their territory, it would be better for them to become federated, as they were unable singly to accomplish the task.’<sup>139</sup> The re-emergence of the federal topic in Derby’s despatch is particularly notable for it would seem that it represented the first official Imperial pronouncement on the topic to the colonies since 1857.<sup>140</sup>

The Imperial Government had withdrawn from its active encouragement of federation due to the Australian colonies disinterest in and criticism of Earl Grey’s proposal for a ‘General Assembly’ to facilitate legislative cooperation on common issues.<sup>141</sup> The rationale behind Derby’s revival of the federal proposition at this time is difficult to

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<sup>137</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1883; ‘The Refusal to Annex New Guinea’, *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883; Lord Carnarvon, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *Times*, 12 July 1883.

<sup>138</sup> McIlwraith had specifically stated in his February 1883 memorandum to the Queensland Governor, Sir Arthur Kennedy that the Government of Queensland was prepared to undertake ‘the whole expense’ in connection to the administration and defence of the annexed territory. Notably Carnarvon concurred with McIlwraith and he asserted that ‘the requirements which I thought necessary in 1875 have now been amply met’. McIlwraith to Governor Kennedy, 13 April 1883, Queensland Parliament, *Annexation of New Guinea*. Brisbane: Government Printer, 1883-1906: 8; ‘Editorial’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 July 1883; ‘Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement’, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 90; Carnarvon, ‘The Annexation of New Guinea: Letter to the Editor of the Times’, *Times*, 12 July 1883. .

<sup>139</sup> ‘Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement’, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 89; Despatch No.37 ‘Declining to Annex New Guinea,’ 11 July 1883, ‘Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea’, PRV7192/1/1 QSA.

<sup>140</sup> The withdrawal of the Imperial government’s active role in promoting the federal idea was illustrated in the fact that no papers on the subject of Australian federation were printed for the British parliament between 1857 and the establishment of the Federal Council of Australasia in 1884-85. Quick and Garran asserted that the inaction of the Imperial government was justified by the lack of interest shown by the colonies. Knox, ‘The Rise Of Colonial Federation as an Object of British Policy, 1850-1870,’ 92-112; Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 100.

determine. In part it can be affiliated to the Gladstone government's anti-imperialist doctrine. Collective colonial autonomy within this principle was a desired aim, as it would relieve the Imperial Government of administrative and financial responsibilities. Yet in view of the Australian colonial framework of independent and separate principalities, most starkly demonstrated by the independent manner of Queensland's annexation action, it would seem implausible that Derby's federal submission would entice the colonies to unite. The *Sydney Morning Herald* consequently articulated its scepticism of Derby's curious association of the New Guinea annexation with federation:

Statesmen and diplomatists do not always give their true reasons any more than ladies do, and we must not therefore assume that what Lord Derby stated in the House of Lords furnished the true causes why the action of Queensland in annexing New Guinea was disallowed....If to force federation was really his purpose, by holding out New Guinea as a bait, then it is obvious that the preceding reasons were simply make-believes; because it is obvious that federation by itself would not diminish the expense of governing New Guinea, nor increase our geographical knowledge of the interior, nor assuage the hostility of the natives. If we were to federate tomorrow would Lord Derby's difficulties vanish?<sup>142</sup>

From the Queensland perspective the 'hint thrown out in reference' to federation appeared 'somewhat dubious in its intent', for two interrelated reasons. First, the *Queenslander* questioned the inherent premise of Derby's statement that the British government would willingly concede to an 'Australian Dominion' what it was unwilling to grant to an already existent and 'unanimous' colonial voice on New Guinea. Thus the paper argued 'we fail to see that the home authorities would obtain a better guarantee of the *bona fides* of Australia under federation than has now been afforded.'<sup>143</sup> Derby's despatch of the 11<sup>th</sup> July 1883, which set forth in point detail the reasoning for the Imperial Government's decision, queried the true extent of colonial

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<sup>141</sup> Earl Grey's Despatch, 31 July 1847 cited in Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 81; Garis, 'Britain and the Australian Federation Movement,' 8-15.

<sup>142</sup> 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 July 1883.

support for Queensland's action.<sup>144</sup> Derby argued that while each of the colonial governments had made representations on the issue:

Those Governments do not, as I understand, definitely endorse the proposal that the island should form part of Queensland, nor do they undertake to share the expenses...but they express in general terms a desire that it should be brought under British rule.<sup>145</sup>

Unaware of this point of view and building on its scepticism of Derby's advocacy of federation, the *Queenslander* hoped that a narrow attitude had not dictated the policy. In particular, the newspaper questioned whether 'the underlying thought' of the federal 'inducement' was:

that the sinister designs on the part of Queensland in reference to the labour traffic could be better restrained if confederation were accomplished, then we not only repudiate such designs, but affirm that the very best means of checking them would be by the annexation of New Guinea, under imperial authority.<sup>146</sup>

The inference made by the *Queenslander* that the colony's coloured labour policy might be 'better restrained' under a federal government is notable for in effect it forecasted a prominent rationale for federation. Yet at this time it reflected Queensland's wary perception of an alignment between the Imperial Government's opposition to the labour trade and its advocacy of colonial federation. The connection between Queensland's 'bad reputation' for its defiant maintenance of a coloured labour force, and the New Guinea repudiation was at first oblique, with Gladstone stating that 'the particular colony of Queensland is not well suited for the position

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<sup>143</sup> 'The Refusal to Annex New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883.

<sup>144</sup> Prior to the receipt of Derby's detailed despatch the colonial response to the Imperial Government's repudiation was based on the telegraphic reports of the related statements made by Gladstone in the House of Commons and Lord Derby's in the House of Lords. And although the *Queenslander* acknowledged that 'the meagre information of a telegram is not sufficient to warrant sweeping condemnation' the content of these telegrams did concisely and accurately present the basis of the decision. 'The Refusal to Annex New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883.

<sup>145</sup> Despatch No.37 'Declining to Annex New Guinea,' 11 July 1883, 'Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea', PRV7192/1/1 QSA.

<sup>146</sup> Derby's despatch was published in full in London on the 21 July, with summarised details cabled to Queensland. The despatch itself was officially received in Queensland on 28th August 1883. Support for the contention that a collaborative control would eliminate Queensland's 'sinister designs' was in part corroborated by the *Times*' editor in May who advanced that the positives to be attained by a joint Australian control of New

which has been assigned to it by the act.<sup>147</sup> Derby's despatch made the connection far more apparent and claimed that if the proposal, that New Guinea should form part of Queensland, had been permitted there would be 'strong objections'.<sup>148</sup> This Derby attributed to the colony's unsuccessful management of 'the difficulties...in connexion with the labour traffic'.<sup>149</sup> He pointed specifically to the 'special difficulty' presented by the statements 'in the press' that asserted that Queensland's desire to annex New Guinea, rested on its facility to provide sugar planters with 'a large supply of coloured labour...without going beyond the limits of the Colony'.<sup>150</sup> Derby's reference to these newspaper reports raises a notable point concerning the content of the despatch. It becomes apparent that significant features of the coloured labour argument, used to validate the refusal, bear a striking similarity to two particular letters published in the London *Times* in mid-May.

Of these two letters the most noteworthy was the publication of an anonymous letter from 'a correspondent of distinction and experience' on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1883.<sup>151</sup> The focus of this letter's 'special objections' was Queensland's 'unfitness for such a task' as governing 'a population as that of New Guinea'.<sup>152</sup> The principal fear was that aspects of Queensland's colonial settlement would be transferred to New Guinea. Of particular concern was Queensland's non-recognition of 'rights in the soil on the part of the native', the 'brutality and cruelty' shown towards Queensland's Indigenous

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Guinea was that the 'Australian colonies collectively would feel a more impersonal dislike to shock humane susceptibilities by a licensed slave traffic.' 'Editorial', *Times*, 15 May 1883; *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883.

<sup>147</sup> 'Extracts from the London Letter of the Melbourne *Argus* to 25<sup>th</sup> May', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883; Gladstone, 'House of Commons, 2 July 1883', *Times*, 3 July 1883.

<sup>148</sup> Despatch No. 37 'Declining to Annex New Guinea,' 11 July 1883, 'Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea', PRV7192/1/1 QSA.

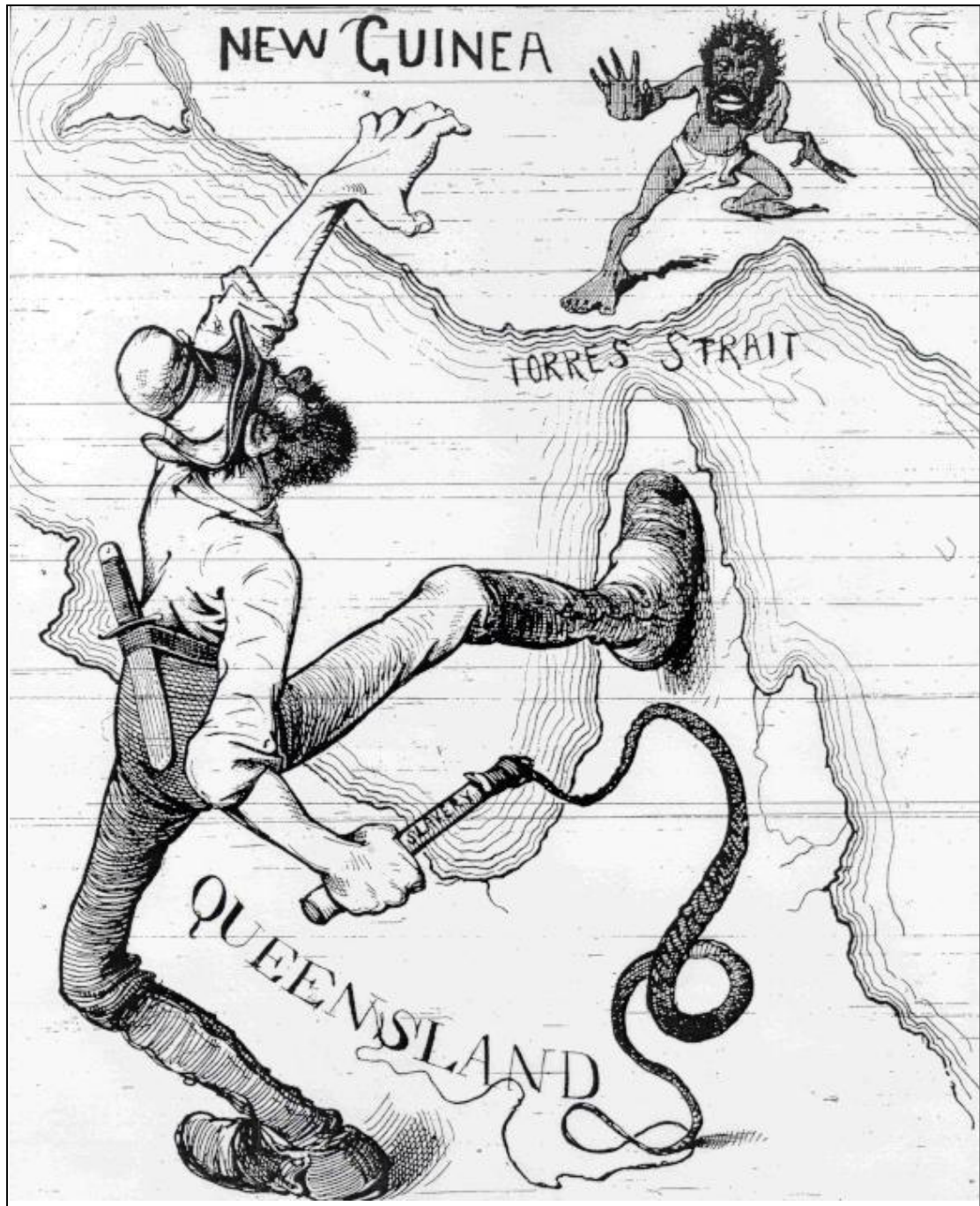
<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Beyond the editorial acknowledgement that the letter was from 'a correspondent of distinction and experience' an additional factor connoted its significance to the *Week* for the article was published in 'large type, a distinction only accorded to very few correspondents of that journal.' 'A Correspondent', 'The Annexation of New Guinea', *Times*, 15 May 1883; 'New Guinea Annexation', *Week*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>152</sup> 'A Correspondent', 'The Annexation of New Guinea', *Times*, 15 May 1883.

population and the legal and moral concerns encased in the coloured labour requirements of the colony's chief agricultural industry.<sup>153</sup>



**Annexation - Carrying the blessings of civilisation into New Guinea.**

Figure 3.3: *Bulletin*, 9 June 1893

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

'If New Guinea becomes part of Queensland', the author declared:

its vast regions will become available as a recruiting ground for labour without any restrictions than those which the Parliament of Queensland itself may think fit to impose. The labour trade along the shores of New Guinea will be a coasting trade, which no Imperial legislation can regulate, and with which no Imperial authority can interfere....it cannot be the less unwise to place them [the sugar planters] in a position of temptation such as it would require almost superhuman virtue to resist. If a vast population of blacks be put under the absolute control of a handful of white landowners, it is impossible not to contemplate very evil results as being, to say the least, quite within the bounds of probability.<sup>154</sup>

Employing the same cumulative form of evidence, the Aboriginal Protection Society, in a letter addressed to Lord Derby and reprinted in the *Times* on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1883, expressed their 'strong conviction' that Queensland should not be 'entrusted' with the 'work of annexing and governing' New Guinea.<sup>155</sup> The reasons advanced for this stance was the 'irresistible' temptation to extend the labour trade and the colony's failure to 'take proper steps for the protection of her aborigines'.<sup>156</sup> Derby's despatch encapsulated these two oppositional lines of reasoning, although more diplomatically encased in the assertion that Queensland's Parliament was representative of 'the white population, whose interests are *altogether different* from those of the coloured races, aboriginal and imported'.<sup>157</sup> In addition Derby made only a broad reference to the 'difficulties' connected with the labour traffic. The alignment between the *Times* articles and Derby's despatch suggests either a conformity of opinion or a degree of influence.<sup>158</sup> The Colonial Office commented that the letter from the Aboriginal Protection Society 'may perhaps on this occasion...represent something like public opinion in putting forward that Queensland has not qualified particularly well for

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> 'New Guinea', *Times*, 18 May 1883.

<sup>156</sup> Reports, in late April, that Queensland labour vessels had begun recruiting in New Guinea waters fuelled and substantiated the conviction that Queensland would be unable to resist the 'temptation' to recruit from New Guinea. Moore, 'Queensland's Annexation of New Guinea in 1883,' 26-54; 'New Guinea', *Times*, 18 May 1883.

<sup>157</sup> Despatch No. 37 'Declining to Annex New Guinea,' 11 July 1883, 'Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea', PRV7192/1/1 QSA. Italics added.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

managing a large black population'.<sup>159</sup> This, in conjunction with the fact that the Office had been 'remonstrating with Queensland for many years' over its labour recruitment practices, endorses the supposition of a conformity of British public and political opinion.<sup>160</sup> On the other hand, as the author was identified as Sir Arthur Gordon the purpose and influence of the letter cannot be dismissed.<sup>161</sup>

The considerable influence wielded by Gordon upon the Imperial Government's decision on New Guinea has been well documented and largely attributed to his long term friendship with the British Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone, Gordon's direct knowledge of the Pacific as the former Governor of Fiji and Western Pacific High Commissioner, and his professional and personal reputation as a holder of 'firm humanitarian views' and his 'consistently inimical' opinion of planters.<sup>162</sup> In combination Gordon's anonymous letter to the *Times*, the associated editorial review and the Colonial Office minute on the letter presents a further public example of Gordon's oppositional involvement. Secondly it provides an indication of the Imperial Government's decision process, as it seems significant that Gordon felt compelled to adopt such an 'unusual' tactical manoeuvre.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 14 May 1883, Queensland No.8239, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>160</sup> Colonial Office Minute, 30 May 1881 cited in Roger B. Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1984, 73.

<sup>161</sup> How the Colonial Office determined that the anonymous 'correspondent' was Gordon was not discussed in the minute. Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 14 May 1883, Queensland No.8239, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>162</sup> A depiction of Sir Arthur Gordon in December 1880, as a humanitarian and a proponent of anti-imperialism presents a measure of how the Australian colonies related to this state of affairs: 'It must be remembered that Sir Arthur Gordon is the pet, not only of the court, but of that powerful party known in England as "Exeter Hall".' 'Vagabond', 'South Sea Massacres', *Sydney Daily Telegraph* 11 December 1880, 'Outrages in the Islands of the Pacific', *JLC*, 31:2 (1882): 893; Brown, 'Queensland's Annexationist Ambitions In New Guinea 1859-1884': 68-69; Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea 1870-1885*. 168-69; Aleck J. Ivimey, 'Fiji. 1. The Question of Federation. 2. Sugar Growing,' *Victorian Review*: 34 (August 1882): 404-21; Jacobs, 'The Colonial Office and New Guinea, 1874-1884,' 106-18; Knapland, 'Sir Arthur Gordon on the New Guinea Question, 1883,' 328-35; Paul Knapland, 'Sir Arthur Gordon And Fiji: Some Gordon-Gladstone Letters,' *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 8: 31 (November 1958): 281-96.

<sup>163</sup> Whilst substantial comment has been directed towards Gordon's involvement only one brief reference has been found in connection to this anonymous letter of Gordon's in the *Times*. Marjorie Jacobs did not elaborate on her succinctly reference to the letter as 'an unusual step'. Jacobs, 'The Colonial Office and New Guinea': 113.

Gordon's letter published in the *Times* differed, only slightly, from a private letter he had written to Gladstone on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1883.<sup>164</sup> In this first version of the letter, Gordon made specific reference to the fact that he had officially expressed his views to Lord Derby and as a result he requested that his letter should be regarded 'as purely private and personal; though of course, I do not presume to dictate to you as to the use you make of it.'<sup>165</sup> The reasoning behind Gordon's change in tack, in making his opinions public, is open only to conjecture. Two plausible contentions are that Gladstone encouraged him to take such action<sup>166</sup> or more feasibly, Gordon independently sought to present an authoritative counter voice to the largely supportive coverage that 'McIlwraith's mild coup d'etat' had received in the 'leading journals' of the British press.<sup>167</sup> The accompanying editorial comment on Gordon's letter in part corroborates this latter supposition, for it noted that:

The emotion of pleasure the news of the step taken by Queensland excited in England on its first publication was sufficient to warn any opponent of the uselessness of absolute resistance....Before the sanction is given, it is very proper the British nation should be taught that the prospect has its clouds as its brightness....Yet nobody doubts that a British annexation of New Guinea in one fashion or another is an accomplished event.<sup>168</sup>

Public apathy was an associative feature of this sympathetic newspaper coverage.

Gordon lamented that the issue of Queensland's proposed annexation of New

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<sup>164</sup> The influential and cumulative impact of this specific letter is further illustrated by the fact that significant portions of it were re-used by Gordon, in collaboration with A.H. Hoskins and Rear Admiral Wilson' in their October 1883 'Report of the Western Pacific Royal Commission', refer to page 8 of the report. *QVP*, 2 (1884): 945-967.

<sup>165</sup> This was further noted on the back of the letter 'WEG prefers his letter not going to Ld. Derby'. Gordon to Gladstone, 20 April 1883 cited in Knapland, 'Sir Arthur Gordon on the New Guinea Question, 1883,' 329-31.

<sup>166</sup> Gladstone replied to Gordon on the 24 April 1883, the contents of this letter are unknown, however Gladstone's correspondence with Lord Selborne on the 23 April 1883 provides a clear indication of Gladstone's strong opposition to the annexation of New Guinea: 'It will take a great deal to convince me of the necessity or propriety of any annexation at all upon the island continent.' To Lord Derby on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1883 Gladstone was even more forthright: 'I hope we find ourselves in a condition utterly to quash this annexation effected by Queensland on her sole authority, for I suppose her to be untrustworthy as well as unauthorised.' Matthew, (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries with Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence. Volume 10.* 435 - 50.

<sup>167</sup> Although anonymous the authoritative nature of the writer was well established by an editorial comment on the letter, which stressed that it was from 'a correspondent of distinction and experience.' The *Queenslander's* summary of the 'leading journals' on the 28 April noted that articles in 'the *Spectator*, *Saturday Review*, *Standard*, and *Daily Telegraph* express approval of the annexation.' *Brisbane Courier*, 5 May 1883; 'A Correspondent', 'Editorial', *Times*, 15 May 1883; 'Annexation of New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 28 April 1883.

<sup>168</sup> 'Editorial', *Times*, 15 May 1883.



Guinea 'will probably fail to attract any very serious notice' and as a result he actively sought to elevate the public profile of the New Guinea question 'before the approval of the Crown and of Parliament is irrevocably given'.<sup>169</sup> The ostensible motivation for Gordon's 'unusual' action was his apparent assessment that the Imperial government were gravitating towards sanctioning the annexation.<sup>170</sup> Through an emotive and public denouncement of Queensland's native and coloured labour policy, Gordon controversially sought to ensure, the *Times* editor surmised, that 'the annexation was arranged on terms which may obviate the incidental evils he most dreads'.<sup>171</sup> The Colonial Office 'regretted' this underlying motive, for it laid Gordon 'open to the charge of trying to force the hand of Her Majesty's Government'.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, in view of the 'exceptional position' Gordon held within the Office, as an 'honorary advisor', his chosen course of action was judged by the Colonial Office to be 'only a little less objectionable than it would be for Under Secretaries or clerks to air their views on this question in the public press'.<sup>173</sup> Offsetting this criticism, however, was the acknowledgement that '[i]nternal evidence leaves no doubt at all that the public are indebted to Sir A. Gordon for this sketch of what ought to be done' and most notably that despite Gordon's 'error in taste...the letter will nevertheless be found to be not only worth reading, but very sound in its reasoning'.<sup>174</sup> Despite this Colonial Office commendation and the *Week's* belief that the letter 'no doubt assisted in no small degree to influence the British Cabinet in arriving at the decision they did', no direct official link can be exclusively made between Gordon's anonymous letter and

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<sup>169</sup> 'A Correspondent', 'The Annexation of New Guinea', *Times*, 15 May 1883.

<sup>170</sup> 'Political considerations with which the public is unacquainted' was one reasoning advanced by Gordon as to why the Imperial Government may consider sanctioning the annexation. An additional submission was that the Imperial Government might deem 'it expedient, for its own convenience and comfort. *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> Gordon employed particularly emotive language and his concluding remarks asserted that if Queensland was granted control over New Guinea 'I cannot but perceive with sorrow that it would disregard a solemn obligation and incur grave moral guilt.' *Ibid.*; 'Editorial', *Times*, 15 May 1883.

<sup>172</sup> F. Fuller, 16 May 1883, 'Annexation of New Guinea', Colonial Office Minute 14 May 1883, Queensland No.8239, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

the Imperial Government's decision. Yet it did arguably have a specific functional role in the process, to stimulate and garner opinion in the public domain.<sup>175</sup>

The impact of Gordon's negative public representation of the issue was threefold. First, to the Colonial Office and the British Cabinet by affiliation<sup>176</sup> Gordon's letter signified, in conjunction with the Aboriginal Protection Society's letter, that 'there will evidently be considerable opposition to annexation to Queensland'.<sup>177</sup> Secondly, its authoritative influence was such that it necessitated a prompt and public repudiation from Queensland's Agent General, Thomas Archer and the colony's Chief Justice, visiting London, Charles Lilley.<sup>178</sup> Both endeavoured, through letters to the editor of the *Times*, to expose the 'fallacies' and 'serious errors' contained in the letter in a concerted effort to negate the detrimental implications advanced by Gordon.<sup>179</sup> And thirdly, whether in association or coincidentally, the mid-May publication of these two letters in the *Times* did represent a demarcation in the public's interest on the New Guinea question, as evidenced by a discernable upsurge in public criticism of

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> While no connection can be specifically made between Gordon's anonymous letter and the Imperial Government's decision it does factor as a significant contribution to the cumulative influence of Gordon's oppositional efforts. One notable feature of Gordon's actions was that while he was in complete accord with prominent members of the Cabinet, such as Prime Minister Gladstone and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Selborne both of whom, in private correspondence, urged the disallowance of the annexation, Gordon's reasoning for opposing the annexation rested almost entirely on a humanitarian argument rather than on a point of policy or law. Derby's encapsulation, in his July despatch, of a negative appraisal of Queensland's native and coloured labour policies presents an identifiable marker of Gordon's influence. Matthew, (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries with Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence. Volume 10.* 435, 50 'New Guinea Annexation', *The Week*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>176</sup> The stated functional role of the Colonial Office in the New Guinea decision was to draw the Cabinet's 'attention to what is said for or against' annexation. 'Annexation of New Guinea', Colonial Office Minute 14 May 1883, Queensland No.8239, CO234/43 Queensland Original Correspondence, AJCP.

<sup>177</sup> Robert W. Herbert, 17 May 1883, 'Annexation of New Guinea', Colonial Office Minute 14 May 1883, Queensland No.8239, CO234/43 Queensland Original Correspondence, AJCP.

<sup>178</sup> Letters of this description had appeared with 'reiterative persistency' throughout 1882 and 1883, however these letters did not arouse Queensland's representatives to submit for publication public rejoinders. Charles Lilley (1827-1897) was a member of Queensland's first legislature and was Attorney-General in the Macalister Ministry September 1865 – July 1866; August 1866 – August 1867. November 1868 he assumed the office of Premier and Attorney General defeated on a no confidence motion in April 1870. Attained a seat on the Supreme Court Bench in 1874 and on the retirement of Sir James Cockle in 1879 assumed the office of Chief Justice a position he maintained until 24 October 1892. H.J. Gibbney, 'Sir Charles Lilley', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 5 Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984:86-88.

Queensland.<sup>180</sup> The London correspondent to the Melbourne *Argus* reported that 'a new phase of public feeling has developed during the last few days. Serious uneasiness appears to be felt in certain influential quarters'.<sup>181</sup> Walter Coote's letter to the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1883, wanted to 'press home the fact that we must be prepared...to take up a position which shall make the repetition of Queensland's historical native policy an impossibility' and further begged the Editor 'to assist in the formation of a strong public opinion on this question'.<sup>182</sup> The resultant focal point of public debate on New Guinea centred primarily on Queensland's 'fitness' to govern the annexed territory and the attendant 'moral responsibility' of the Imperial Government to ensure the welfare of the 'native' inhabitants.<sup>183</sup> This, Sir Henry Parkes noted, had been Gordon's main objective and he had 'helped this view outside to his utmost'.<sup>184</sup> A consequent feature of this concentrated public and political attention on Queensland's treatment of its Indigenous population and its continued coloured labour policy was that it provided a valid and compelling moral pretext to refuse the colony's annexation of New Guinea;

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<sup>179</sup> Thomas Archer, 'The Annexation of New Guinea' Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 17 May 1883; Charles Lilley 22 May 1883 cited in 'Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea. In Continuation of July 1876,' *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*, 47 (1883): 1-91.

<sup>180</sup> Reflective of the shift in momentum was the contrast between Gordon's 15 May statement that the New Guinea annexation 'will probably fail to attract any very serious notice' and Rear Admiral J. Moresby's 21 May 1883 remark, in a letter to the *Times* editor, that 'public attention being so strongly directed towards the annexation of New Guinea.' Carl Feilberg noted in June that 'the labour traffic in the south seas and the employment of Polynesians on plantations in Queensland and Fiji is, I notice, attracting much attention in England now.' J. Moresby, 'Letter to the Editor', *Times*, 21 May 1883; Thomas Archer Queensland's Agent General in London sent a sample of these critical letters to the Queensland Government from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Evening Standard* and *St James Gazette*, Press Clippings, 'Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea', PRV7192/1/1 QSA; Carl Feilberg, 'The Polynesian Labour Traffic', Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 10 August 1883.

<sup>181</sup> 'Extracts from the London Letter of the Melbourne *Argus* to 25<sup>th</sup> May', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>182</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 May 1883 cited in Press Clippings, 'Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea', PRV7192/1/1 QSA.

<sup>183</sup> 'A Correspondent', 'The Annexation of New Guinea', *Times*, 15 May 1883; Lord Selborne to Gladstone, 22 April 1883, cited in Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 164.

<sup>184</sup> An alternative perspective on the 'native' welfare argument was advanced by some correspondents for example 'F' in a letter to the Editor of *Times* on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1883 directed the Aboriginal Protection Society's attention to the alternative possibility of permitting New Guinea to be at the 'tender mercies of crews of lawless men' or a foreign power taking control of New Guinea and its inhabitants – 'those who take an interest in aborigines should beware how they recommend the withholding of that [British] flag lest a flag of a darker hue be hoisted.' 'F', 'To the Letter to the Editor of the *Times*', *Times*, 21 May 1883; 'A Correspondent', 'The Annexation of New Guinea', *Times*, 15 May 1883; Sir Henry Parkes to Alex Stuart, New South Wales Premier, 7 November 1883, 'Sir Henry Parkes Correspondence: Letter From.' Sydney: Mitchell Library, 11 (A881): 381-382.

a factor corroborated by its integration in Derby's despatch as a significant causal justification for the refusal.<sup>185</sup> Thus the *Sydney Morning Herald* editorialised that that the Imperial Government:

seem possessed with the fixed idea that Queensland wanted New Guinea as a labour market, whereas the real fact is that New Guinea is more open to the labour trade now than it would have been had annexation been confirmed. There is no labour trade with Polynesia except subject to the Queensland Government regulations, and, subject to those regulations, New Guinea is just as open as any other island to this particular trade; but with a Government in New Guinea, the trade could be put under still more stringent restrictions. It is certainly no kindness to the natives of New Guinea to leave them as they are; and to suppose that we are going to avoid all difficulties by a simple abstention is a great mistake.<sup>186</sup>

Other 'political considerations' clearly featured in the Imperial Government's decision. In particular the economic aspects of the British Liberal government's anti-imperialistic policy<sup>187</sup> and the broader diplomatic issue of maintaining cordial relations with Germany, in light of growing tensions with France over Britain's continued occupation of Egypt.<sup>188</sup> These matters however did not factor prominently in the public forum. The immediacy, with which the *Queenslander* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* aligned the refusal with the coloured labour question, indicates that the public

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<sup>185</sup> Derby introduced his discussion on the ramifications of Queensland's native and coloured labour policies on the decision with a resolute qualification that if 'it had been shown' that the annexation had 'become necessary' the proposal would have been effectively countered by 'strong objections' to the proposal of New Guinea forming part of Queensland. McIlwraith's Memorandum on the refusal, dated 17 July 1883, discredited the purported reasons advanced by Derby and isolated, in a broad reference only, the underlying reason for the refusal as being connected to Queensland's native and coloured labour policy: 'If, then, the real reason for the refusal to annex New Guinea be, not the expense, but the difficulty of providing for the government and *protection* of the native races'. 'Extract from the Minutes of Proceedings of the Executive Council of Queensland' 17 July 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of The Federal Council*, 1:33.

<sup>186</sup> 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 July 1883.

<sup>187</sup> Derby articulated concisely the British Cabinet's view on territorial expansion in February 1883: 'I need not tell you that annexations are not looked upon with great favour in this country'. Quote cited in Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 149-50.

<sup>188</sup> Gladstone, contrary to his anti-expansionist policy, had sent to Egypt, in July 1881, an expeditionary force of 35,000 men under Sir Garnet Wolseley to put down the nationalist insurrections lead by Colonial Arabi Bey. By September 1881 Britain had effectively taken control of Egypt. The essential impetus for this action was Britain's fear that it would lose its strategic and financial control of the Suez Canal. Travis L. Crosby, *The Two Mr. Gladstones: A Study in Psychology and History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997: 171-72; Peter Overlack, 'Bless the Queen and Curse the Colonial Office': Australian Reaction to German Consolidation in the Pacific, 1871-99, *Journal of Pacific History*, 33: 2 (September 1998): 133-53; Paul Knapland, *Gladstone and Britain's Imperial Policy*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966: 140, 56-57; 'A Correspondent', 'The Annexation of New Guinea', *Times*, 15 May 1883.

critique of Queensland had in effect prepared the public for the probability that the Imperial Government would refuse to sanction the action.<sup>189</sup>

Consistent with the momentum of opinion generated against Queensland, James Garrick<sup>190</sup>, a member of the Queensland Liberal opposition, declared in his reply to McIlwraith's parliamentary announcement of the Imperial Government's refusal, that McIlwraith had 'received exactly the sort of answer which I thought he would'.<sup>191</sup> Additionally, the *Week* concluded that the annexation was 'a miserable, tawdry fiasco...from first to last' and claimed that there were 'abundant reasons why the Imperial Government should have come to the decision they have'.<sup>192</sup> Particular emphasis was assigned to Queensland's recruitment aspirations in New Guinea and this the paper advanced was a 'very strong' oppositional argument 'in the old country'.<sup>193</sup> Contrary to such opinions and the mounting negative press, McIlwraith asserted in parliament that he had expected 'with confidence that a very different answer would be given'.<sup>194</sup> The intonation of his 'Ministerial Statement', announcing the decision, portrayed not only McIlwraith's incredulous reaction but provides a

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<sup>189</sup> Queensland's Agent General in London Thomas Archer had forwarded a selection of these critical articles onto the Queensland Government and many were reproduced in the Brisbane papers. For the *Queenslander's* comments on this aspect refer to the discussion on page 8. The *Sydney Morning Herald's* editorial for the 5<sup>th</sup> July commented that Britain seemed 'possessed with the fixed idea that Queensland wanted New Guinea as a labour market'. 'The Refusal to Annex New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883; 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 July 1883.

<sup>190</sup> James Garrick, (1836-1907), Barrister, Liberal Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly - July 1867-September 1868, May 1877- November 1883; Liberal Member of the Legislative Council – November 1869 - December 1870, November 1883 – August 1894. Garrick held the ministerial positions of Secretary for Public Lands and Mines, February – December 1878; Attorney General, December 1878 – January 1879; Colonial Treasurer, November – December 1883; Post Master General, November 1884 – June 1884; Agent-General For Queensland 1884-88, 1890-1895. Waterson, *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament*: 68.

<sup>191</sup> 'Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement', *QPD*, 39 (1883): 90.

<sup>192</sup> 'Editorial', *The Week*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> Geoffrey Serle remarked in his study of Victoria that 'Service and McIlwraith and their governments had expected the worst and were ready to move together', however no direct evidence can be found to substantiate this. Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of The Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1971: 183 'Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement', *QPD*, 39 (1883): 91.

characteristic example of his 'blunt, outspoken' personality and his propensity to be 'very head-strong and impatient of obstruction to or criticism of his proposals':<sup>195</sup>

I do not wish to comment on the reasons given...for the course so inimical to the interests of Queensland and the other Australian colonies which the mother-country has thought fit to adopt on the present occasion. I merely wish to point out that so far as Queensland is concerned- and the other colonies, too - I look upon the act of annexation of New Guinea to British territory – or, at all events, to Queensland territory – as an accomplished fact. I question – and with all modesty I do it – I question the legality of the decision of Mr. Gladstone....At the present time there is no question that New Guinea must form a part of the British Empire....it therefore behoves the [Queensland] Government to take the most definite steps to see that this question is settled...<sup>196</sup>

Indignant and unswerving in his New Guinea objective Mcllwraith took active steps to obtain colonial co-operation to attain redress. As Charles Bernays succinctly acknowledged, Mcllwraith 'was far too strong and dictatorial a man to be turned aside by the *ipse dixit* of the Colonial Office.'<sup>197</sup>

Mcllwraith's exact motivation in ordering Henry Chester to proceed to Port Moresby and take formal possession of the eastern half of New Guinea on the 4 April 1883 fundamentally remains an open question. The conventionally accepted version has been derived from Mcllwraith's consistent explanation that his 'precipitate' action was defensive, to thwart foreign encroachment into New Guinea. The irregular and impulsive nature of the act itself, however, raised suspicions of ulterior motives.

The most obvious was that New Guinea, if annexed, would serve as a labour recruitment field to resolve the colony's sugar planter's acute labour shortage. The

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<sup>195</sup> *The Worker*, 21 October 1893; William Corfield, *Reminiscences of Queensland, 1862-1899*. Brisbane: Fisher, 1921: 89.

<sup>196</sup> 'Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement', *QPD*, 39 (1883): 89.

<sup>197</sup> A column in the *Queenslander*, entitled 'Political Froth' also stressed Mcllwraith's tenacity on the issue – 'Sir Thomas isn't going to let drop such a prize as a New Guinea; these Scotchmen are proverbial for holding on to the "bawbees".' 'By An Abstainer', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 93.

advent of this explanation was not surprising within the context of the intensifying campaign, primarily by British humanitarian and missionary groups, against Queensland's continued involvement in what was referred to as 'thinly veiled slavery'. The independence conferred on Queensland through self-government, which effectively prevented any external intervention into the colony's internal matters, had been the basis by which Queensland countered such opposition to its differential developmental methods. The colony was however increasingly alert to the ostracising effect of this stance. A columnist in the *Queenslander* denounced the 'iniquitous South Sea Island traffic which is dragging the fair name of Queensland in the dust, and branding her with the accursed mark of Cain.'<sup>198</sup> Such a declaration confirms that Queensland and McIlwraith in particular was aware of the growing and authoritative campaign against the colony's employment of a coloured labour force and this in part challenges the likelihood that New Guinea was annexed for labour. It would therefore seem unlikely that a 'masterful' statesman within this context would have chosen such an overt act based on an exceptionally vulnerable motivation. A second factor that further detracts from the labour theory was that as the eastern half of New Guinea was not in the possession of any civilised power, labour recruitment was openly permitted. Yet if the annexation of New Guinea had been sanctioned, Queensland's labour vessels would have been barred from recruiting in and around New Guinea.

A more feasible motive for McIlwraith's 'bold and daring' exploit was affiliated to his 'barnacle tenacity' to stay in office.<sup>199</sup> The purported threat of Germany's colonising ambition in New Guinea afforded McIlwraith with an opportunity to redress his

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<sup>198</sup> 'Endymion', 'Light and Shade', *Queenslander*, 12 May 1883.

<sup>199</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 10 November 1883.

politically precarious position by captivating political support through a 'bold stroke' and diverting local attention from important internal matters. This factor was inconsequential in the Imperial Government's consideration of McIlwraith's independent and unauthorised 'summary step'.

The initial position of the Colonial Office was that the annexation of New Guinea to Queensland was the 'best solution to an increasing difficulty'.<sup>200</sup> The influential 'Exeter Hall' group countered this. Particularly detrimental to Queensland's cause was the provocative public campaign anonymously directed by Sir Arthur Gordon. Based on humanitarian considerations, Gordon argued that in view of Queensland's brutal and cruel treatment of its Indigenous population and its continued maintenance of a coloured labour force the colony was particularly unsuited for the task of governing a population such as New Guinea's. Gordon's negative appraisal of Queensland's native and coloured labour policy was encapsulated in Lord Derby's July 1883 despatch as a causal justification for the Imperial Government's repudiation of the annexation.

From a local perspective the annexation of New Guinea can be classified as a watershed in Queensland politics. More specifically the critical and public scrutiny of Queensland's coloured labour policy provoked by the act and the colony's consequent labelling as a 'nigger establishment' instilled an ardency into and broadened the appeal basis of the internal campaign to abolish this socially contaminating policy.<sup>201</sup> The question of coloured labour emerged as a decisive

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<sup>200</sup> R. Herbert, Colonial Office Minute, 'Annexation of New Guinea to Queensland', 28 February 1883, Queensland No.3518, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/43 AJCP.

<sup>201</sup> Rev. James Chalmers, 'Recruiting South Sea Island Labour. Letter to the Editor to the *Courier*', *Queenslander*, 15 December 1883.



factor in the substantial election victory of Samuel Griffith. Under Griffith's directorship, Queensland's new Liberal Government introduced radical labour reforms to address these mounting concerns and to 'vindicate the fair name of the colony, and to cleanse it from the disgrace cast upon it by the Slave Ministry of Mr. McIlwraith.'<sup>202</sup> On the negative side these reforms produced a new set of political, social and economic issues for Queensland and its parliament. The destabilising impact of the separatist and white labour causes would significantly shape Queensland's involvement in the federal movement.

The second and more significant feature of Lord Derby's despatch was his advocacy of a federal union between the Australian colonies. Queensland in particular viewed the proposal with scepticism, perceiving an Imperial attempt to encourage the formation of a federal authority capable of dismantling the colony's coloured labour policy. Indirectly the colony had identified defence as an influential and practical function for the prospective federal government. Ironically, McIlwraith to seek redress for the Imperial Government's repudiation of his annexation of New Guinea, adapted Lord Derby's federal proposition and initiated a course of action that would, within five months, achieve the unlikely event of a unanimous colonial agreement on a federal proposal.

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<sup>202</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 25 January 1884.



## Chapter 4

### The Establishment of the Federal Council: 'the first beat of a national pulse'?<sup>1</sup>

Harnessing an event in June 1883 regarded as 'symbolical and prophetic', the Victorian premier James Service declared his intention to launch a 'renewed effort' to awaken the federal movement 'to life and vigour'.<sup>2</sup> Endorsement of the federal objective was a notable theme throughout the 'jubilant' celebrations for the opening of 'three miles of railway' between Albury and Wodonga, which for the first time connected the railway systems of New South Wales and Victoria.<sup>3</sup> Many amongst the 'distinguished assembly' made reference to the emblematic significance of the rail union to the broader question of Australian federation.<sup>4</sup> The president and councillors of the Shire of Wodonga pronounced that:

this may well be considered an event in the history of the Australian colonies. These lines are the first railway systems which unite capital and capital. This event will be but the first step towards welding the Australian colonies as one great nation, and is the augur which foretells how quickly the dawn of federation is approaching.<sup>5</sup>

A representative of Victoria's Legislative Council, N. Fitzgerald, hoped that:

whatever differences may separate our respective legislative actions, that the wheels of our administrative engines will always continue to move as

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<sup>1</sup> James Service, 'President's Speech', 25 January 1886, *Federal Council of Australasia. Session 1886*: 11.

<sup>2</sup> James Service (1823-99) Scottish Merchant migrated to Victoria in 1853. First elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly in 1857 as the Member for Melbourne. Premier for six months in 1880 and 1883-1886. The Intercolonial Banquet', *Queenslander*, 23 June 1883; *Argus*, 18 June 1883 cited in Colonial Office: Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43-44, AJCP; 'Sir James Service', in Part II Federation A-Z: Short Entries in Irving, (ed.), *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*: 424.

<sup>3</sup> On the 14<sup>th</sup> June approximately one thousand Victorian and New South Wales representatives, including both the colonial governors, and premiers assembled in an engine-shed converted into 'a grand banqueting hall' at Albury station. The importance of the occasion was indicated in the preparations made for the celebration. Beyond the decorative work, 'a great feature' of the arrangements, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* reporter noted, was 'the application of the electric light to the interior of the building' drawing power from a 30-horse power engine 200 lamps were arranged 'in groups of six upon candelabra which are partially hidden in bunches of flowers.' 'New South Wales and Victorian Railways. The Albury-Wodonga Junction', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 1883; 'The Intercolonial Banquet', *Queenslander*, 23 June 1883.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

smoothly as those of the locomotives which brought us here today, and that the bonds which unite us shall be as firm as the rails over which those engines travelled, and that the obstructions in either of the Parliaments to the grand object of federation will not be tolerated.<sup>6</sup>

The overarching assessment of the 'Albury celebrations' was that there existed a 'unanimous...desire' for federation.<sup>7</sup> Yet intermixed amongst the pronouncements of support were the enduring hallmarks of Australia's colonial development; intercolonial bitterness, suspicion and rivalry.

A discernible feature of the speeches made by the New South Wales representatives was the existence of a lingering resentment to Victoria's 1850 separation from New South Wales. Lord Augustus Loftus, the New South Wales governor, 'gracefully' described the 'iron link' between the two colonies as 'the fond embrace of the child by the mother.'<sup>8</sup> Sir John Robertson<sup>9</sup> more directly enquired:

Who ever asked for separation in New South Wales? We never asked for separation. When we were in poverty and distress Victoria left us. We are now richer perhaps than they, and now they come back to us and we are ready to receive them with open arms.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> In line with the celebratory nature of the occasion the *Argus*' editorial review of the Albury festivities applauded the federal directive that was laid down, though as aside it remarked that 'the Albury addresses disclose the existence of views which will have to be reconciled'. 'Editorial', *Argus*, 15 June 1883; 'The Intercolonial Banquet', *Queenslander*, 23 June 1883.

<sup>8</sup> 'New South Wales and Victorian Railways. The Albury-Wodonga Junction', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 1883.

<sup>9</sup> Sir John Robertson (1816-1891) Squatter, politician migrated to New South Wales when aged four. Took up first pastoral run in 1835 and entered politics in 1856 at the colony's first parliamentary elections under the new *Constitution Act*. He remained a Member of New South Wales Legislative Assembly for thirty years and was five times Premier of New South Wales. It is interesting to note that Robertson when Premier of New South Wales was accused in 1877 of deliberately forestalling the construction of the rail extension from Wagga Wagga to Albury, 'out of sheer spite to Victoria'. New South Wales' Agent-General William Foster repudiated this claim but did acknowledge that the extension of the railway to Albury had been 'opposed, and perhaps even retarded' on the grounds of the 'intense jealousy which appears to exist between Melbourne and Sydney' and this he considered was 'clear proof...of the absence of a Federal spirit, or of any general desire for Federation on the part of either Colony.' Foster, 'Fallacies of Federation,' 79-115; Bede Nairn, 'Sir John Robertson', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 6 (1851-1890): 38-48.

<sup>10</sup> 'New South Wales and Victorian Railways. The Albury-Wodonga Junction', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 1883.

The assertion by a Victorian speaker that they 'were proud to acknowledge the parent colony, although at the same time asserting their own manhood' corroborated, though less overtly, the reciprocal nature of the ongoing friction between the 'two most important colonies'.<sup>11</sup> The fluctuating intensity, particularly of New South Wales' aversion to and suspicion of Victoria proved to be an immovable impediment to the federal cause. On another level, James Service's handling of the reproachful questioning of Victoria's 1850 separation highlighted the perpetual wrestle for precedence between colonial realities and the federal ideal. Service jovially responded to Lord Loftus' and John Robertson's invitation 'for Victoria to come back to her mother' by declaring that 'I can do little better than say on behalf of Victoria I will try and come back to my mother. (Laughter and applause)'.<sup>12</sup> As premier and duty-bound to defend his colony, Service detailed the 'reason' for Victoria's separatist action. To defuse the situation and to continue his dual role as a colonial premier and an advocate of federation, Service stressed the destructive effect of the issue:

Rivalries, jealousies, and ignorance arise from long separation. Now we are hugged together in bands of iron. We will have nothing like the cowcatcher on the locomotive to sweep away the material objects on the rail, but we have to sweep away the rivalries and jealousies which embitter a nation and destroy it.<sup>13</sup>

The requisite need to temper the influence of colonial individualism was a significant theme of the gathering and in its prominence the extent of the divide between the colonies was demonstrated. The Victorian representative of the colony's Legislative Assembly, the Honourable G.B. Kerferd noted in his address:

I say it is an extraordinary thing that I, in addressing you in New South Wales, feel myself to be a foreigner in a foreign land ....Let us abolish that

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<sup>11</sup> N. Fitzgerald, cited in 'New South Wales and Victorian Railways. The Albury-Wodonga Junction', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 1883.

<sup>12</sup> James Service, cited in *Ibid*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*.

wretched distinction that when you cross the stream we crossed today you find yourself in a foreign land and treated as the subject of another country.<sup>14</sup>

The development of greater commercial and passenger interaction, generated by the linkage of the two colonies by the 'iron horse', it was hoped would facilitate a 'more intimate knowledge' of each colony by the other.<sup>15</sup> 'Federation', the Victorian Duncan Gillies<sup>16</sup> asserted, 'can never come to these colonies until we know each other a little better, then that union will be fostered which will be the means of bringing about true federation, which is nothing unless it is preceded by mutual self-respect.'<sup>17</sup> The joint emphasis on the destructive qualities of colonial isolationism and the consummate 'desirability' of federation, articulated at Albury, was reasonably interpreted as an indication that the federal sentiment was 'undoubtedly gaining strength'.<sup>18</sup>

A 'matter of doubt', for the *Queenslander*, was the capacity for such sentiment to be transferred into the local arenas.<sup>19</sup> The underlying principle for such scepticism, the paper explained, was that '[u]nder the influence of an enthusiastic gathering

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<sup>14</sup> G.B. Kerferd, cited in *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Indicative of the lack familiarity between the colonies was James Service's admission that he had lived in Victoria for thirty years and until this Intercolonial banquet he had never been in New South Wales. John Douglas, 'Imperial Federation From an Australian Point of View,' *Nineteenth Century*, 16: 94 (December 1884): 853-67; Duncan Gillies cited in 'New South Wales and Victorian Railways. The Albury-Wodonga Junction', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 1883.

<sup>16</sup> Duncan Gillies (1834 –1903) Scottish migrant, Miner and Victorian politician. Elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly in 1861 as the Member for Ballarat West. An early radical Gillies' policies increasingly positioned him as a Conservative. On the resignation of James Service and Graham Berry in 1886 Gillies became Premier in a coalition government with Alfred Deakin. Gillies' government worked consistently to bring about Federation but his efforts to form closer affiliations with New South Wales failed to interest Sir Henry Parkes. Margot Beever, 'Duncan Gillies', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 4 (1851-1890): 250-252.

<sup>17</sup> 'New South Wales and Victorian Railways. The Albury-Wodonga Junction', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 1883.

<sup>18</sup> *Argus*, 18 June 1883 cited in Colonial Office Papers, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/43-44 AJCP.

<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, Queensland was represented at these celebrations by a former premier John Douglas. Moreover, he played an active part in the festivities by proposing a toast to the Parliaments of New South Wales and Victoria. Douglas' presence and his seating at the centre table is notable for he appears to be the only colonial guest from outside the two colonies of New South Wales and Victoria. In his speech Douglas maintained his persistent advocacy of federation: 'I pray to God that the union of New South Wales and Victoria may be the first step by which the whole of Australia may be united in the bonds of everlasting

like that assembled at Albury many antagonisms lie dormant, but when the representatives returned to their own political atmosphere too often these adverse views revive with increased force.<sup>20</sup> Despite identifying the omnipresent influence of localism, the *Queenslander* saw in the 'discussion by so many representative men at one time' an auspicious sign that federation had 'entered the domain of practical politics, and consequently as only awaiting a favourable opportunity for full discussion in an intercolonial conference.'<sup>21</sup> An alternative assessment of the significance of Albury was made by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which substantively challenged the precept that federation had become a practical question for statesmen to 'deal with'. It noted that despite 'a great deal of festive talk about federation' there still remained no practical proposals for its advancement.<sup>22</sup> The central issue being contested by both these views was the question of timeframes: did the Albury pronouncements indicate that federation was imminent, or a proposal for the future?

Elevating the issue beyond rhetorical debate were the 'stirring' events associated with Queensland's annexation of New Guinea, which unexpectedly and forcibly thrust the federal question into 'the range of practical politics'.<sup>23</sup> To Thomas McIlwraith, the Imperial Government's repudiation of his New Guinea annexation had presented the colonies, 'in connection with the recent [Albury] proceedings a

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friendship' 'New South Wales and Victorian Railways. The Albury-Wodonga Junction', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 June 1883.

<sup>20</sup> An indication that the federal 'enthusiasm' espoused at Albury had begun to evaporate within weeks of the representatives returning to local politics was highlighted by a report from Melbourne that remarked that 'on this question of federation it may be profitable to mention that those who have no occasion to travel on the Melbourne and Sydney railway look with equanimity, mingled with amusement, at the want of concord in the arrangements....Perhaps we ought to admire the noble independence which prompts the two Governments to act with so lofty a disregard for each other. 'The Intercolonial Banquet', *Queenslander*, 23 June 1883; 'Our Melbourne Letter', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 July 1883.

<sup>21</sup> 'The Intercolonial Banquet', *Queenslander*, 23 June 1883.

<sup>22</sup> 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1883.

<sup>23</sup> Parsons, 'Federation,' 90-95; 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1883.

most favourable opportunity...for a decided effort in the cause of federation.'<sup>24</sup> This chapter will examine the process by which a seemingly incongruous event, the Imperial Government's refusal to sanction Queensland's independent and discredited action in New Guinea, fostered the formation of Australia's first federal body, the Federal Council of Australasia. In the overall chronicle of the federal movement to this point, the establishment of this centralised legislative Council plainly presents as a significant and practical advancement on the essentially rhetorical model of federation that had preceded it. Yet, the Council's contemporary and historical status in the federal movement was and is diminutive. Notably, in contrast to this undervaluing of the Federal Council, the 'precipitate' action of Queensland in annexing New Guinea has been historically elevated as the precursor for the later federation movement.<sup>25</sup> The inherent quandary to be probed is why a subjective event, which prompted the establishment of the Federal Council, has achieved prominence rather than the resulting product of that event.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1883 notification that Britain had formally refused to confirm the steps taken by Queensland in its April annexation of New Guinea prompted an

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<sup>24</sup> McIlwraith quoted in 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1883.

<sup>25</sup> The precedence of different markers of the federal movement's progress is a recurrent feature of the federal account. On one level it reflected the maintenance of intercolonial rivalry. Quick and Garran, a Victorian and New South Wales combination prioritised the significance of the rail union between Victoria and New South Wales and Service's role in arranging the Sydney convention. To the Queensland historians A.C.V. Melbourne and C.G. Austin this was an 'incomplete statement of facts' and indicated that Quick and Garran were 'anxious to belittle the suggestion' and action of McIlwraith. The fading significance of the Federal Council to the movement appears to begin when the 'larger federation movement' gains momentum in 1890s. Thus the standard narrative formula that was seemingly adopted to depict the series of events which occurred in 1883 most commonly involved only a synoptic statement of McIlwraith's action, variously described 'precipitate' or 'audacious', and its repudiation by the Imperial Government. The presentation of a fuller discussion to include the resulting conference in Sydney in 1883 and the resulting Federal Council Bill is infrequent. Generally the event is noted and then the discussion rapidly steered towards Parkes 1889 Tenterfield address. Austin, 'Influence of Queensland on Federation,' 509-23. Refer to discussion in Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*. : 109-115; A.C.V. Melbourne, 'Queensland History: Sir Thomas McIlwraith and the Inter-Colonial Conference of 1883', A.C.V Melbourne Collection: MSS 3/F-L Box 6. Fryer Library, University of Queensland: 1-4; *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation* is the most recent



immediate colonial reaction. The significant bearing that Queensland's coloured labour policy or more particularly the Imperial government's 'fixed idea that Queensland wanted New Guinea as a labour market', had had on the decision was colonially recognised but generally dismissed.<sup>26</sup> Colonial censure of the verdict revealed a divide between what the Imperial Government regarded as the central issue and the colonial perspective. Thus, while the question of coloured labour had factored prominently in the decision, the more contentious issue for the Australian colonies was that the Imperial Government had dismissed an urgent and seemingly valid colonial case for Imperial protection from the danger of foreign encroachment.

In the debate on the New Guinea question in the House of Lords on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1883, Lord Derby presented the Imperial view of the purported foreign threat, one that confirmed that the Imperial authorities were dissatisfied with the case put forward by Queensland:

The explanation given comes to no more than this – that there were strong reports throughout Australia of the intention of some power – nobody knew what Power – to seize some part – nobody knew what Part – of New Guinea. For these reports it does not appear that there was a shadow of proof forthcoming. They were simply a creation of the anxiety of the colonists in the matter.<sup>27</sup>

Prime Minister Gladstone more forcefully declared that Queensland's foreign occupation fears were 'an apprehension which we have no reason to entertain'.<sup>28</sup> Derby endeavoured to reassure the colonies and decreed that any settlement of

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and authoritative text on federation and while it has adopted a colony by colony approach the 1890s remained the principal period under discussion. Irving, (ed.), *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*.

<sup>26</sup> The Brisbane and Sydney based newspapers made specific reference to the impact of the coloured labour question on the decision. The Imperial Government's essential proposition that the annexation was refused to guarantee the protection of Papuans was refuted. It was argued that the best means to curtail the nefarious practices of recruiters was through annexation. The *Sydney Morning Herald* therefore asserted that 'If Polynesia were under a British Protectorate, nine-tenths of the difficulties of the labour traffic would cease at once.' 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 July 1883.

<sup>27</sup> 'Parliamentary Intelligence. House of Lords, 2 July 1883', *Times*, 3 July 1883.

New Guinea by another 'Power' would be regarded by Britain as 'an unfriendly act'.<sup>29</sup> In this debate it was a speech by Lord Carnarvon, a former Secretary of State for the Colonies, which presented the most astute summary and acknowledgement of the developing colonial point of view. He stated that:

it is difficult for us to place ourselves at the Australian standpoint and to understand the anxiety with which the bare possibility of a foreign settlement close to their shores inspires the colonists. It may be, as Lord Derby holds, that they underrate their own power, but it is equally open to them to argue that we underrate the vulnerability of their interests.<sup>30</sup>

Confronted by the Imperial Government's adoption 'of a course so inimical' to their interests, the colonies 'unhappily' concluded that their welfare had 'been subordinated to the exigencies of party politics and European diplomacy'.<sup>31</sup> The colonies therefore generally resolved that 'if the mother-country refuses us protection' then combined and 'concerted' colonial action was required to settle the question 'from a defence point of view'.<sup>32</sup>

Defence had been Victoria's declared motive, prompted by Queensland's annexationist policy in New Guinea, for its intensified campaign to persuade the Imperial Government to annex the New Hebrides to thwart French designs. McIlwraith initially ascribed culpability for the Imperial Government's negative verdict to Victoria's action:

Had the New Guinea and Queensland question stood alone, I believe the answer would have been favourable; but when the other colonies went on to annex more territory the Government thought fit, under pressure at home, to take a different course than they would otherwise have taken. I think that it is unfortunate for us in respect of the New Guinea question that the southern colonies proceeded to annex certain of the Pacific Islands.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> 'House of Commons, 2 July 1883', *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> 'Editorial', *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> McIlwraith, 'Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement', 4 July 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 90; 'The Refusal to Annex New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*; 'The Annexation Question in Melbourne', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>33</sup> No additional annexations had occurred in the Pacific, Victoria's campaign was one of petitioning the Imperial Government to act on their behalf as opposed to Victoria acting independently. Queensland, in

In the weeks that followed the decision, Victoria emerged as Queensland's strongest supporter and accordingly by mid-July Mcllwraith had modified the tenor of his argument. In a Memorandum dated 17th July on the topic of the Imperial Government's refusal and notably circulated to the other colonies' premiers, Mcllwraith incorporated Victoria's Pacific concerns to give emphasis to the necessity for combined colonial action:

If Her Majesty's Government does not feel that the annexation of New Guinea, or the islands adjacent to Australia, is of much importance to the empire at large as it is to the Australian Colonies, let some means be devised by which those islands may be held and governed for the benefit of the Australian people.<sup>34</sup>

In outlining his position on the decision Mcllwraith was resolute that he had 'easily combated' the various reasons assigned to the refusal and officially reaffirmed his conviction that the action 'ought to have been accepted'.<sup>35</sup> From this perspective he therefore urged the other colonies to make 'several and united representations' to compel the Imperial Government to reconsider their decision.<sup>36</sup> The 'real reason for the refusal' Mcllwraith acknowledged, though he discreetly phrased it was 'the difficulty of providing for the government and protection of the native races' and

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collaboration with the other Australian colonies had initially supported Victoria's expansionist policy, to thwart French designs of taking control of the New Hebrides, but by September 1883 each of them, except Western Australia, had reneged. Queensland's Agent General Thomas Archer was also convinced that Victoria's annexation ambitions had frustrated Queensland's claim on New Guinea and this was based on his interview with Lord Derby in April 1883. Derby argued that the ratification of the New Guinea annexation would be used as a precedent for further annexations in the area and 'was apt to continue as long as there remained anything beyond to annex.' Mcllwraith, 'Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement', 4 July 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 91; Roger C. Thompson, 'James Service: Father of Australian Foreign Policy?', *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 16: 62-65 (1974-1975): 258-76; B.N. Primrose, 'Other Factors in the Annexation of South-Eastern New Guinea,' *Western Australia University Studies in History*, 5: 2 (1968): 51-118; Thomas Archer, Queensland's Agent General, 'Notes of Conversation with Lord Derby at an interview on 16<sup>th</sup> April', Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea and the Administration of the Protectorate, PRV7192/1/1, QSA.

<sup>34</sup> Mcllwraith's memorandum was circulated to the other colonial premiers as a more considered statement of his position than his reactive telegrams sent on the 4 July, which simply appealed for 'prompt and unified action on the part of the colonies'. 'Extract from the Minutes of Proceedings of the Executive Council of Queensland' 17 July 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 33-34.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

this he believed could be met with 'sanction and authority of the united colonies'.<sup>37</sup> Though he later emphatically denied that Queensland had been 'activated by any such motive' as labour recruitment this statement did concede the influence that Queensland's coloured labour policy had had on the Imperial Government's decision.<sup>38</sup> The implication within this memorandum was however that this 'difficulty' had been used to countermand the broader colonial unease over foreign encroachment. Thus drawing on the colonial discontent engendered by the decision as an additional example of the Imperial Government's reluctance to address colonial concerns and employing Derby's conditional advocacy of federation, McIlwraith laid forth the case for a federal union between the Australian colonies:

There can be no doubt that the refusal to annex New Guinea, together with the possible acquisition by foreign powers of some of the Pacific Islands contiguous to Australia, does raise very serious questions intimately connected with the future interests of the Australasian Colonies....I submit that a case has arisen which may be made use of to call into existence the higher forms of government required to give effect to this policy of annexation....It is not possible to give authoritative effect to the wishes of the people of Australia in anything beyond their own domestic interests, except through the intervention of Her Majesty's Government...Here is work for the united Colonies to do, if they can be got to unite. I suggest that a convention of delegates should be held to discuss the basis upon which a Federal Government could be constituted.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> McIlwraith, in his September point by point rebuke of Derby's despatch, made an additional attempt to eliminate the shadow cast by Queensland's coloured labour policy and stressed to Derby that the annexation of New Guinea specifically to Queensland was not considered 'to be a vital part of the question: on the contrary, they would prefer that the territory should be made a crown colony or, better still, placed under the control of the "United Australian Colonies."' McIlwraith to Lord Derby, 28 September 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 40-41.

<sup>39</sup> Designating the meeting as a Convention as opposed to a Conference was arguably a purposeful device on McIlwraith's behalf for it endeavoured to elevate the topic of discussion and bestow the actual intercolonial meeting with a 'higher status'. Second, such a designation would clearly demark this particular meeting from the regularly held (though generally non-productive) Intercolonial conferences. Throughout the negotiations for the Convention and during its proceedings the suitability of this title was much discussed. 'Extract from the Minutes of Proceedings of the Executive Council of Queensland' 17 July 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 33; Service to Stuart, 25 August 1883, 'Questions Respecting Annexation in the Pacific', Confidential Print Australia, CO 881/6 AJCP.

The sincerity of McIlwraith's appeal for federation at this point in time is open to inquiry on two interrelated grounds. First, McIlwraith's concept of nationalism was dualistic, in which the narrower model of Queensland nationalism plainly held primacy over the broader Australian form. Such pre-eminence typified the collective strength of Queensland's regional nationalism, which was the product of a complex amalgam of historical, economic and environmental factors and was embodied in Queensland's 'urgent, underlying, and inextinguishable' demand for progress.<sup>40</sup> In this context, previous proposals for federation had been met with indifference in Queensland. The intersection of this precedent with McIlwraith's personality, his failing political position and the colonial opposition to Queensland's coloured labour policy further challenges the genuineness of McIlwraith's federal appeal. Arguably, his federal proposition was either an expedient course to bolster his popular appeal or a conciliatory step designed to bring about his goal of annexation, by satisfying the conditional federal 'inducement' contained in the Imperial Government's decision on New Guinea.<sup>41</sup> Contemporary reservations over the impulse behind McIlwraith's appeal for federal union were isolated and focused on the implication of the proposal and its potential ramifications. The *Sydney Morning Herald* for example argued:

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<sup>40</sup> Oswald, 'Government, and Queensland Politics,' 1-8

<sup>41</sup> A degree of cynicism is evident in McIlwraith's response to Lord Derby's advocacy of Australian Federation. He wrote: 'It is therefore with much regret we have received announcement of the decision referred to, and find that the only result of our appeal is the expression of a hope that 'the time is now not distant when, in respect of questions of annexation, the Australian Colonies will effectively combine together''. Yet, at the same time it is evident that McIlwraith had strategically recognised that federation was an additional condition placed in the way of annexation. In 1875 Lord Carnarvon had presented the colonies with another seemingly unachievable condition to annexation. Britain was unwilling to appropriate any further territory unless each colony contributed £4000 annually to assist in the cost of the proposed occupation of the eastern half of New Guinea. In 1883 McIlwraith again addressed this earlier condition and emphasised in his February 1883 Memorandum on New Guinea that Queensland was prepared to undertake 'the whole expense' in connection to the administration and defence of the annexed territory. This McIlwraith proposed would 'effectively dispose of the only objection raised on the part of the Home Government, during previous correspondence on the subject, to the annexation of New Guinea by an Australia colony.' The Colonial Secretary [McIlwraith] to His Excellency the Governor [Kennedy], 13 April 1883, Queensland Parliament, *Annexation of New Guinea*. Brisbane: Government Printer, 1883-1906: 8; 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 July 1883; 'Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement', *QPD*, 39 (1883): 90; Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea 1870-1885*. 107-10, 55-56 'The Refusal to Annex New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883.

Is this to be understood to imply that a certain feeling of irritation, which the rebuff has undoubtedly produced, might be turned to account for bringing the colonies more closely together? If so, the reason urged in favour of a movement is rather a reason why anything of the kind should be delayed....Few things are more to be depreciated than the commencement of a movement in that direction on the strength of a belief that we have suffered at the hands of the Imperial Government an injury or a slight. The circumstances might afterwards be forgotten, but the feeling would remain, and our future history would be affected by it.<sup>42</sup>

Tasmania's premier, William Giblin, feared that the assemblage of a Federal Convention, 'for the purpose of expressing more forcibly and more collectively our dissatisfaction with the decision...would be the beginning of difficulties the end of which I do not profess to be able to foresee.'<sup>43</sup> It was evident that an 'indignant attitude' had arisen in the Australian colonies consequent to the Imperial Government's refusal.<sup>44</sup> This sentiment had, the English press believed, the potential to give 'rise to a dangerous agitation in the colonies', but doubts were expressed, locally and in Britain, over the colonies' capacity to effectively harness the situation and convert it into a binding federal union.<sup>45</sup> The principal barrier to this conversion was the enduring prevalence of colonial individualism and doubts were held whether the 'humiliating snub' of the New Guinea repudiation commanded the necessary potency, as an issue, to override provincialism and

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<sup>42</sup> 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 July 1883.

<sup>43</sup> W.R. Giblin to McIlwraith, 30 July 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 36.

<sup>44</sup> The London *Standard* cited in the *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>45</sup> The *Queenslander* considered it unlikely that the federation proposal would succeed for 'the intimation that the British Government will not do its duty to the colonies...because they cannot agree to federate, may create a new impediment instead of removing the difficulties already in the way of federation.' The London *Standard* doubted whether the federation of colonies would 'be brought about for some time to come.' The London *Economist*, on the question of Australian federation feared that 'the financial and tariff differences of the various colonies will prove an almost insuperable obstacle.' In the opinion of 'the great war correspondent' Archibald Forbes, who toured Australia in 1883: 'Federation is as much a chimera under the present conditions as it would be a necessity under the other conditions' such as war. 'The Refusal to Annex New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883; The London *Standard* cited in the *Queenslander*, 7, 14 July 1883; The London *Economist*, cited in the *Queenslander*, 28 July 1883; 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 16 June 1883; Archibald Forbes, 'The Present and Future of the Australasian Colonies,' *Nineteenth Century*, 14: 80 (October 1883): 720-32.

provoke combined action.<sup>46</sup> Such reservations were seemingly corroborated in the variable intensity of the colonial response to the rejection of Queensland's action.

In New South Wales, at the end of July, it was reported that the 'annexation business still looms up, and though it has not yet acquired the dignity of a burning question it excites some interest.'<sup>47</sup> In Queensland, 'Endymion' reproached Queenslanders for their lack of action:

It takes very little short of an earthquake or a general election to move the public of this city of Brisbane, or surely we should not have left it to Melbourne citizens to call the first public meeting on the subject....Certain it is that Queenslanders are a long-suffering race. The colony may be slandered in the vilest manner....Still the working man rises not in his wrath...Looking at our national character in this light, it does not seem wonderful that no public demonstration has been got up in favour of New Guinea for Australia.<sup>48</sup>

In contrast the interest aroused in Victoria was according to the colony's governor, the Marquis of Normanby, 'very deep' and he had 'never known any question in Victoria which has commanded such universal support'.<sup>49</sup> The provocation for Victoria's numerous and 'enthusiastic' public meetings throughout the second half of 1883 was not exclusively connected with the repudiation of Queensland's annexation, but rather a combination of factors associated with James Service's broader annexationist policy.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> 'Financer', 'Financial Result of Eighteen Months of Griffith Administration,' *Queensland Review*., Vol. 1: 2 (September 1885): 101-08.

<sup>47</sup> 'Intercolonial News', *Queenslander*, 28 July 1883.

<sup>48</sup> 'Endymion', 'Light and Shade', *Queenslander*, 21 July 1883.

<sup>49</sup> Normanby to Derby, 30 July 1883, 'Relapsed Criminals: Correspondence and Papers Relating to Deportation to French Possession in the Pacific', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 6-7.

<sup>50</sup> Between mid July and the end of October 1883, 30 public meetings were held throughout Victoria. Further support for Service's annexation policy was presented through resolutions passed by 25 Local Councils, 3 branches of the Australian Natives Association and the Shepparton and Lower Goulburn Agricultural and Pastoral Society. Printed Paper, 'Resolutions of Public Meetings and of Municipal Bodies in Favour of the Movement, and Protesting against Transportation of Foreign Convicts to the Islands', attached to Service to Governor of Victoria Marquis of Normandy, 13 November 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals And Printed Papers Of The Federal Council of Australasia*. 1. Hobart: William Thomas Strutt, Government Printer, 1886: 43-44; Thompson, 'James Service: Father of Australian Foreign Policy?', 266.

At the root of Victoria's 'intense indignation' was the imminent danger presented to the Australian colonies by both the 'recent outburst of French enterprise' in the Pacific and more provocatively the legislative progression of France's 'Relapsed Criminals (Recidivistes) Bill'.<sup>51</sup> This signalled France's intention to increase the number of convicts to be transported from France to New Caledonia and additionally proposed an extension of France's penal settlements to the New Hebrides.<sup>52</sup> The direct threat imposed by the regional presence of an additional 20,000 French criminals, officially described as 'dangerous, steeped in vice, debauchery and crime', was threefold. First, it was 'almost certain' that following the 'planting of convict settlements in these parts...the Islands' would be left open to 'annexation by other nations'.<sup>53</sup> Second, it would significantly compound the existent problem of the increasing frequency with which French convicts escaped and landed in Australia and thirdly, the close proximity of this enlarged convict establishment would negatively impinge on Australia's post-convict reputation.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The 'Recidivistes' Bill was read for the first time on the Chamber of Deputies on the 8<sup>th</sup> May and was passed 29<sup>th</sup> June and was anticipated to come before the Senate in its next session. French activity in the Pacific region had elevated alarm in the Australian Colonies, particularly in early July when a Reuters telegram announced that a French war steamer had hoisted the French flag on one of the islands of the New Hebrides. *St James' Gazette*, 24 May 1883 cited in 'Press Clippings', Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea and the Administration of the Protectorate, PRV7192/1/1 QSA; Brown, 'Queensland's Annexationist Ambitions In New Guinea 1859-1884': 81 Foreign Office, 'Memorandum Respecting Transportation of French Convicts to New Caledonia and the Pacific', 29 October 1883, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO 234/43 AJCP; Service to Victoria's Agent General, Robert Murray Smith, 24 July 1883 cited in Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of The Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*. 184-85; Thompson, 'James Service: Father of Australian Foreign Policy?', 262-65

<sup>52</sup> Foreign Office, 'Memorandum respecting Transportation of French Convicts to New Caledonia and the Pacific', 29 October 1883, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO 234/43 AJCP.

<sup>53</sup> Service to Normandy, 27 July 1883, 'Relapsed Criminals: Correspondence and Papers Relating to Deportation to French Possession in the Pacific', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 6-7.

<sup>54</sup> From 1871 France had utilised New Caledonia as a penal settlement and from 1874 the colonial governments of Australia had made regular complaints to the Colonial Office over the increasing incidence of French escapees landing in Australia. The estimated number of detected escaped, expired or pardoned French convicts that reached Australia was 247. *Ibid*: 23-24; Colonial Office Paper, 'The Attitude of the Australian Colonies with Regard to the Introduction of Convicts', 30 October 1883, Australia: Confidential Print 1833-1923, CO881/6 AJCP.



Following the end of Britain's transportation of convicts to Australia, the Australian colonies had adopted, a Colonial Office paper reported in 1883:

several legislative measures, which were designed to protect the persons and property of the settlers from the violence and depredation to which they appeared to be exposed by the diffusion of a...convict caste, and to clear the Colonies from the imputation under which they then laboured, or feared themselves to labour, of being receptacles of the criminal classes.<sup>55</sup>

The proposed French scheme then, to make 'the Pacific Islands the receptacle for the dangerous classes of France' was, from Service's perspective, a 'crisis [in] Australian history' and therefore he 'strongly urged', as a pre-emptive measure, that the Imperial Government annex the 'New Hebrides and the islands up to New Britain' before France stepped in.<sup>56</sup> For a community normally adsorbed by provincial matters the 'depth and earnestness' of Service's and the Victorian public's conviction on this essentially external subject was, as the historian Roger Thompson noted, 'remarkable'.<sup>57</sup> While the impetus for Victoria's 'concerted action' was the colony's 'strong sense of present danger' at the escalating threat of foreign intervention in the Pacific, the linchpin to its stridency was Service's prominent role in galvanising public and political support for his annexationist policy, which he profiled as 'a measure essential to our safety and welfare'.<sup>58</sup> On

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<sup>55</sup> Justice Higinbotham, at a public meeting held 16 July 1883, more passionately articulated the lingering and intense sentiment associated with Australia's convict heritage: 'About 30 years ago England was persuaded that that was a wrong act; wrong in itself, injurious in its consequences, leading to detriment and damage, and also a shame to all free Englishmen who arrived in these colonies. She promised to abandon that system, but the effect of a bad example was not removed as soon as the act was abandoned....Englishmen looked down on us; that is, having done us a wrong they really were disposed to despise us for coming to live in contiguity with a community that was criminal.' *Argus*, 17 July 1883, 'Relapsed Criminals: Correspondence and Papers Relating to Deportation to French Possession in the Pacific,' *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 8-11; Colonial Office Paper, 'The Attitude of the Australian Colonies with Regard to the Introduction of Convicts', 30 October 1883, Australia: Confidential Print 1833-1923, CO881/6 AJCP: 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*: 6; Service to Victoria's Agent General, Robert Murray Smith 24 July 1883 cited in Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*: 185.

<sup>57</sup> Service to Normandy, 27 July 1883, 'Relapsed Criminals: Correspondence and Papers Relating to Deportation to French Possession in the Pacific', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 7-8; Thompson, 'James Service: Father of Australian Foreign Policy?', 266.

<sup>58</sup> Service to Normandy, 27 July 1883, 'Relapsed Criminals: Correspondence and Papers Relating to Deportation to French Possession in the Pacific', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 7-8; The Agent Generals for New South Wales, New Zealand, Queensland and Victoria to Lord Derby, 21 July 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Ibid*: 6-7.

the broader Australian front, Service advocated that the position of the colonies consequent to the Imperial Government's refusal and the 'events' in the Pacific made 'the necessity for Federation...so peculiarly apparent'.<sup>59</sup> Pivotal to Service's growing influence was the strength of his local political position. At the head of a strong coalition government, Service was afforded the uncommon advantage of time and political freedom to prioritise his non-domestic annexationist and federal objectives.<sup>60</sup> In the pursuit of these directives a notable feature of Victoria's associated and 'most cordial and friendly' support of Queensland's New Guinea and federal aspirations was the absence of references to the objectionable coloured labour question.<sup>61</sup>

Victoria had been a vocal opponent of Queensland's continued reliance on coloured labour and a Brisbane correspondent in Melbourne had characterised the situation in June as, 'it has been rather a fashion here lately to go in for abusing Queensland about the Polynesian labour traffic.'<sup>62</sup> The merger of Victorian and Queensland interests, in response to the Imperial Government's refusal, initiated an apparent suppression of Victoria's activism on coloured labour.<sup>63</sup> Not only did Queensland's general domestic issues receive 'a good deal of attention' in the Melbourne papers but the *Argus* additionally did the 'colony full justice' through its defence of Queensland's government and planters from 'the slanders current at

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<sup>59</sup> Service to McIlwraith, 31 July 1883, Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea and the Administration of the Protectorate, PRV7192/1/1 QSA.

<sup>60</sup> Service had been returned to power in early 1883 at the head of a strong coalition, which held a large majority and was opposed by a weak opposition. The Agent General for New South Wales, New Zealand, Queensland and Victoria to Lord Derby, 21 July 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 11; Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*: 18-21; Thompson, 'James Service: Father of Australian Foreign Policy?': 259-60.

<sup>61</sup> 'The Premier's Statement', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883.

<sup>62</sup> 'Intercolonial News. Victoria', *Queenslander*, 23 June 1883.

<sup>63</sup> On the Queensland front, as has been noted, criticism of the purported negative influence that Victoria's annexation ambitions in the New Hebrides had had on the Imperial decision ceased.

home as to the treatment of kanakas.'<sup>64</sup> Feasibly, Victoria endeavoured to dissociate the coloured labour issue from the New Guinea annexation, because this stigma to all intents and purposes constituted a valid reason for Victoria and the other Australian colonies opposed to coloured labour to accept the Imperial Government's decision as warranted in the circumstances. Within the dynamics of Service's active expansionist policy, vocal and unanimous colonial opposition to the decision was crucial to bring about a change to the Imperial Government's persistent anti-Imperialistic policy. Coloured labour in this dynamic therefore presented a potentially distracting and divisive influence.

Undeniably the coloured labour question factored prominently in the Imperial Government's deliberations on Queensland's annexation of New Guinea. But in the colonial arena the issue was tactically excised as a motive for annexation and was replaced by the more provocative threats of foreign occupation and the convict menace. Without the taint of coloured labour, the Imperial Government's refusal could be represented as neglect of legitimate colonial concerns and as 'holding Australia back from acting in her own interests.'<sup>65</sup> An associated feature of this representation was the commendation of McIlwraith's attempted annexation as a bold, independent and self-protective move that was reminiscent of the exploits of Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh and Cecil Rhodes; or as John Douglas phrased it '[h]enceforth it will be recorded in our history as a dashing

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<sup>64</sup> A member of the Queensland Legislative Council, W. Graham depicted this merger with Victoria as – 'They at once sympathised with Queenslanders, and heartily co-operated in the movement to bring about what they all desired....he found that, as a general rule there was more sympathy between Queenslanders and Victorians, than between Queenslanders and New South Welshmen. He always attributed the circumstance to the fact that there was a closer resemblance between the two former, who were more go ahead and more energetic than their slower, though, no doubt, highly respectable neighbours New South Wales.' W. Graham, 'Federal Council of Australasia', 5 August 1884, *QPD*, 42 (1884): 41; 'Intercolonial News. Victoria', *Queenslander*, 21 July 1883.

<sup>65</sup> Service to Governor Normanby, 16 June 1883 cited in Merze Tate, 'The Australasian Monroe Doctrine: Genesis of the Doctrine,' *Political Science Quarterly*, 76: 2 (June 1961): 264-84.

exploit carried out at the instigation of one who had a comprehensive grasp of the situation.<sup>66</sup> In the contemporary record of the federal process it was the frequency with which this refashioned version of Mcllwraith's annexation of New Guinea was advanced, stripped of its problematic features that laid the foundations for its use as the suitable and stirring precursor of the later federation movement. From Service's Victorian perspective, then, these 'events' rendered 'now' as the 'opportune' time for cooperative action in the 'direction' of federation.<sup>67</sup>

Such an attitude did not however accommodate the dynamics of each individual colonial setting. In Queensland, in stark contrast to the Victorian situation, the political atmosphere for Mcllwraith had grown 'darker and yet darker.'<sup>68</sup> From mid-1882, two matters had attracted 'the greatest attention...of the public' in Queensland; the coloured labour question and the land grant railway proposal.<sup>69</sup> Despite a lengthy recess of parliament and Mcllwraith's 'bold yet timely' annexation of New Guinea, the 'momentous character' of these matters had continued to rouse 'strong manifestations of political feeling'.<sup>70</sup> At the beginning of July, the topic of 'supreme importance' was the second reading of the Transcontinental Railway Bill, in which 'hung the fate of the Mcllwraith Ministry'.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Douglas, 'Imperial Federation: From An Australian Point of View': 859.

<sup>67</sup> Service to Mcllwraith, 31 July 1883, Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea and the Administration of the Protectorate, PRV7192/1/1 QSA.

<sup>68</sup> 'Light and Shade. By Endymion', *Queenslander*, 4 August 1883.

<sup>69</sup> 'Hon. S.W. Griffith at Roma', *Queenslander*, 7 April 1883.

<sup>70</sup> Parliament was to resume in early 1883 however the Sixth Session of Mcllwraith's Parliament did not commence until the 26<sup>th</sup> June. For Griffith, Mcllwraith's failure to recall parliament was 'reprehensible in the extreme' and Griffith argued that Mcllwraith had 'caught at any pretext to escape from the position he found himself in', that being not having the numbers to 'carry his measures'. Interestingly, Mcllwraith attributed his reasons to New Guinea for he believed that if the 'House was sitting' Griffith would have seen it as 'an opportunity to damage the Government, he would certainly have weakened the hands of the Government in the course which they adopted.' 'Address in Reply', 26 June 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 12-19; 'The Refusal to Annex New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883; 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 16 June 1883.

<sup>71</sup> That the debate on the Transcontinental Bill was 'fraught with considerable interest' was demonstrated by the large public attendance at the debate, which it was reported 'crowded' the galleries of parliament and created 'quite a crush' downstairs. A notable factor, repeatedly referred to was the attendance of a large number of 'ladies' on the final night of debate it was reported that '70 ladies were present'. 'Our Brisbane Letter', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1883; 'By An Abstainer', 'Political Froth', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

The predicted defeat of Mcllwraith's bill took place on the 5<sup>th</sup> July, when the question was resolved in the negative by 27 votes to 16, and as a result of this 'state of affairs' and with 'regret' Mcllwraith waited on the Governor to request the dissolution of parliament in pursuant of a general election.<sup>72</sup> That the 'lion was not quite gone' was demonstrated by Mcllwraith's subsequent defeat of the Liberal opposition on the Appropriation Bill, and it was consequently claimed that he went to the polls retaining a 'majority on general matters' and thus the outcome of the election was 'extremely difficult to forecast.'<sup>73</sup> At this juncture, the external issues of the New Guinea 'rebuff' and the French convict threat intersected with Queensland's 'little political world' and affirmed the precedence of the colony's internal affairs.<sup>74</sup>

Considering the 'exceptional interest' in the debate on the Transcontinental Railway Bill and the Coolie labour issue in general, it was not surprising that in the 'turmoil of a general election' the Queensland public were 'immersed in...local contentions.'<sup>75</sup> The *Queenslander* consequently claimed that '[a]fter the election,

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<sup>72</sup> The defeat of the Warrego Railway Bill at the end of the previous session of parliament had indicated the likelihood that the Transcontinental Bill would be defeated, for the Warrego bill had proposed the construction of a smaller line on the land grant principle. Consequently the newspaper coverage of the impending debate on the Transcontinental Bill acknowledged that it seemed 'more than probable' that the bill would be rejected. Furthermore, Griffith had declared in his Address in Reply speech that it 'was well known on both sides of the House that the Bill was not going to pass'. The eleven-vote margin was larger than expected for it had been estimated that Mcllwraith's bill would be defeated by approximately five votes – in the final count four Government members crossed the floor and eight did not vote. 'Ministerial Statement', 10 July 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 148; 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 16 June 1883; Samuel Griffith, 'Address in Reply', 26 June 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883):11-12; 'Transcontinental Railway Bill – Second Reading – Resumption of Debate', 5 July 1883, *QPD*, 39 (1883): 147.

<sup>73</sup> 'Our Brisbane Letter', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1883; 'By An Abstainer', 'Political Froth', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>74</sup> 'Our Brisbane Letter', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1883; 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>75</sup> The brief reports from Queensland's various regional areas published in the *Queenslander*, displays the colonial emphasis on local contentions. Almost all identified the defeat of Mcllwraith's government and the General Election as the 'absorbing topic of interest and conversation at present' and none made reference to the repudiation of the Queensland's annexation of New Guinea. 'Country News', 14 July, 21 July 1883; 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 16 June 1883; 'Some of the Election Writs', *Queenslander*, 28 July 1883; 'The New Guinea Question', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

there comes next in interest our New Guinea annexation'.<sup>76</sup> This perception of local matters was strongly contested by the *Week*:

The attempt to make it appear that the people of Queensland, or any considerable minority of the people, care two straws about New Guinea, or feel the least interest in its annexation to Queensland, is about as barefaced a fabrication as was ever attempted.<sup>77</sup>

Discounting the obvious political bias of each paper, the notable feature of these two divergent opinions is that the level of public interest was in itself a contestable issue.<sup>78</sup> In an election environment, the popular advantage that this external matter held within the local political arena was under challenge.

Within the Queensland context the prospective political and populist appeal of an extension of the colony's territory had undoubtedly factored in McIlwraith's decision to pursue the formal possession of New Guinea. 'The most masterful political leader', as Deakin later succinctly described McIlwraith, had executed the action, in an effort to bolster his failing political position and to divert the public's concentrated focus away from 'local contentions'.<sup>79</sup> Or as the *Queensland Punch* satirically phrased it: 'Play New Guinea a little stronger, Mac....put it so as to catch the imagination more effectively'.<sup>80</sup> What was effectively invoked was Queensland's underlying insecurity or 'selfish fear' of any external intrusion on or appropriation of the colony's wealth.<sup>81</sup> Accordingly, McIlwraith's action of annexing New Guinea to thwart German designs, was judged locally to be 'most popular here' and furthermore throughout April, May and June the 'Griffith oracle had been

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<sup>76</sup> 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>77</sup> 'The Premier's Blunder', *Week*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>78</sup> The political bias of these papers was contemporarily well acknowledged. The *Brisbane Courier* and its weekly organ the *Queenslander* were strong McIlwraith supporters, whilst the *Telegraph* and its weekly the *Week* backed Griffith.

<sup>79</sup> Deakin, 'The Federal Council of Australasia,' Digital Text Version: <http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/fed>, 155.

<sup>80</sup> 'Cabinet Meeting', *Queensland Punch*, 1 June 1883.

<sup>81</sup> Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland; From 1770 to the Close of the Year 1881. Volume 1.*: 253.

dumb on the question'.<sup>82</sup> That Griffith, in effect, considered it politically imprudent to overtly challenge the motivation of Mcllwraith's action, demonstrated the existent, though carefully fostered association between foreign/external threats and an upsurge in public support. More particularly, Griffith's noncommittal stance allowed him time to determine the extent of local support.<sup>83</sup> For Mcllwraith, the Imperial Government's sanction of his course of action was imperative to induce the full force of political and populist backing. The July refusal consequently negated the popular attraction of the annexation, a factor illustrated by the *Week's* claim that there was a want of interest, or more critically by the *Queenslander's* censure of the public for their lack of remonstrance. Mcllwraith's own appeal for public action further confirmed the diminished allure that the annexation held locally:

We hope that Australia will continue to raise her united voice in protest against this indignity. And it is not sufficient that the Governments alone should act, for it is very desirable that, as in Melbourne, the citizens should give expression to their views in public meetings.<sup>84</sup>

To wrest back public interest emphasis was laid on the 'humiliation' engendered by the decision for which 'no self-administered solace can utterly obviate'.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> In the days immediately after Chester's proclamation Griffith publicly acknowledged his support for the annexation of New Guinea to Britain. At the same time he referred to 'the coloured labour question' as 'the stated intention' of the annexation but made little further comment on the matter. Griffith later explained that 'before expressing a definite opinion' he wanted to refer to the correspondence before and after the annexation. 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 16 June 1883; 'The Ministerial Banquet at Dalby', *Queenslander*, 16 June 1883; 'Hon. S.W. Griffith at Roma', *Queenslander*, 7 April 1883; *QPD*, 39 (1883): 13.

<sup>83</sup> Until the Imperial Government had accepted or adopted the act Mcllwraith's annexation had no legal force. On receipt of the Imperial Government's decision Griffith consulted 'such of my friends as I have been able to see' and decided that 'it would not be expedient to take any action with reference to the refusal of the Imperial Government to ratify the attempted annexation.' In the context of his anticipated political defeat of the Mcllwraith ministry Griffith's question of expediency seemingly related to the possible effect that his support of Mcllwraith's action would have rather than on his attitude towards the Imperial Government's decision. Griffith was far more orthodox in his interactions with the Imperial government and arguably would have accepted the authority of the decision courteously. Griffith to A. Archer 4 July 1883, cited in Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*.  
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<sup>84</sup> 'The Premier's Blunder', *Week*, 14 July 1883; 'Endymion', 'Light and Shade', *Queenslander*, 21 July 1883; 'The Premier's Despatch on New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 28 July 1883.

<sup>85</sup> 'Our Brisbane Letter', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1883.

Secondly, McIlwraith was touted as the staunch defender of Queensland's security and thirdly, the purported sense that 'we are in great danger' was intensified.<sup>86</sup>

Advanced as an additional indicator of 'how eagerly the eyes of another nation are turned towards colonial acquisition in this part of the globe' were the 'defence and disgrace' concerns associated with France's Recidivistes Bill.<sup>87</sup> The 'intolerable nuisance' of being 'plagued with escapees' from France's penal settlement in New Caledonia, was not a new nor unfounded source of irritation for Queensland.<sup>88</sup> In 1881, the colony's legislature had been prompted to pass a Bill 'to prevent the influx of foreign and other criminals into Queensland', and the issue had featured, though not prominently, in McIlwraith's reasoning for his April annexation of New Guinea.<sup>89</sup> More immediately, the continued diplomatic difficulties associated with the extradition of three French escapees arrested in Queensland and the newspaper reportage of the legislative progression of the Recidivistes Bill had sharpened the public focus on 'the careless action of her French neighbours'.<sup>90</sup> 'Subsequent events' had confirmed a definitive shift in France's activities in the Pacific and this purportedly 'rendered the Australian people still more sensitive

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<sup>86</sup> 'Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement', *QPD*, 39 (1883): 90.

<sup>87</sup> McIlwraith to Lord Derby, 28 September 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 40-41; 'The Annexation Question', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883.

<sup>88</sup> 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 16 June 1883.

<sup>89</sup> Royal Assent was withheld on this Bill, as the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Kimberley had objected to the 'stringency and inequality of the provisions' and asked for a modification of 'its general tenor'. Interestingly, the Colonial Office sought Sir Henry Parkes' opinion on this Bill despite Lord Kimberley's query 'will not Queensland be angry if it hears that we are consulting Sir H. Parkes?' The Colonial Office Permanent Under Secretary Robert Herbert spoke to Parkes who had 'heard nothing of it'. Colonial Office Minute, 'Bill to Prevent the Influx of Criminals' 7 March 1882, Queensland Original Correspondence CO234/42 AJCP; Queensland Governor, A.H. Palmer to Secretary State for the Colonies, Lord Derby, 16 June 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 20; Colonial Office, 'The Attitude of the Australian Colonies with Regard to the Introduction of Convicts': 5.

<sup>90</sup> Sir Charles Lilley (Chief Justice of Queensland) discussion of Powell, 'New Guinea and the Western Pacific,' 29-30. The *Queenslander* published a weekly report on the progression of the Recidivist Bill in the French Legislature and closely followed the ensuing negotiations with the Brisbane and Sydney French Consul's on the issue of the three escapees from New Caledonia. *Queenslander*, 17 February, 4 August 1883; *Queenslander and Week*, January-July 1883.



to...danger'.<sup>91</sup> 'Disquieting' for the *Queenslander* was the report that a French vessel of war had 'hoisted the French flag on the islands of Mallicolo and Erromanga' in the New Hebrides and this action seemingly corroborated France's intentions to extend its penal settlements into the New Hebrides.<sup>92</sup> To demonstrate the 'evils and dangers which loom ahead' and to reinstate some of the vehemency that was displayed in the 'old...agitation against convictism' the *Queenslander* evocatively aligned the New Guinea issue with the newer threat of French designs in the Pacific:

It is quite clear that...Queensland especially, cannot risk the danger of a foreign Power in the occupation of New Guinea menacing the rapidly growing trade of Torres Strait. We have already suffered enough from the convict settlement in New Caledonia, and the liability to another such den of Continental infamy, within a few miles of our north-eastern boundary, cannot be endured.<sup>93</sup>

In his 'energetic representations' to the Colonial Office McIlwraith employed the same associative argument that the deepening threat presented by 'these spreading hordes of criminals....connects itself with the New Guinea question' and this combination compellingly demonstrated that Imperial action in the Pacific was 'doubly necessary'.<sup>94</sup> In the Imperial domain Robert Herbert, the Permanent Under-Secretary in the Colonial Office and previously Queensland's first premier, considered the French convict issue as an 'extremely serious matter'.<sup>95</sup> Yet Lord Derby held 'suspicions that the Queensland people are making the most of this in

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<sup>91</sup> McIlwraith to Lord Derby, 28 September 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 41.

<sup>92</sup> 'The Premier's Statement on New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883.

<sup>93</sup> 'The Refusal to Annex New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883; 'Editorial', *Argus*, 26 November 1883; 'The Premier's Statement on New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883.

<sup>94</sup> 'The Premier's Statement on New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883; McIlwraith to Lord Derby, 28 September 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 40-41.

<sup>95</sup> Robert Herbert, 30 July 1883, Colonial Office Minute, 'Extradition of French Fugitive Criminals', 26 July 1883, Queensland Original Correspondence, C0234/43 AJCP.

order to strengthen *their* case for annexation'.<sup>96</sup> On the Queensland domestic front, the combined external concerns of New Guinea, New Caledonia and the New Hebrides failed to instigate any real degree of public concern.<sup>97</sup> While the *Queenslander* could argue that 'public sentiment requires no other safety-valve than the columns of the daily Press' it was apparent that in the 'wordy warfare' of an election campaign the public's focus had been maintained on domestic issues, in which "loans,' 'land grants,' and 'coolies' are heard above the general din.'<sup>98</sup> An additional indicator of the pervasiveness of the transcontinental and coolie issues was the lack of references to the New Guinea and French matters in Mcllwraith's election speeches and, most notably, his withdrawal at the end of July from active involvement in the Intercolonial convention he had initiated on the federal idea.<sup>99</sup> In fact it would seem that the only electoral advantage derived from the annexation of New Guinea was that extracted by Griffith who used it to personally attack his opponent.

Motivated by local political factors, in particular the negative prospect of being popularly associated with Mcllwraith, Griffith had decided that 'it would not be

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<sup>96</sup> A factor contributive to Derby's suspicions was the evident though indeterminate extent of the collaboration between Service and Mcllwraith to establish a sense of urgency over French activities in the Pacific. In June Queensland's Acting Governor, Sir A. H. Palmer, wrote to Lord Derby to qualify the content of his telegram of the 12 June; 'Have heard with alarm French annexation of New Hebrides imminent.' Palmer explained that the telegram was sent 'at the instance' of Mcllwraith who had received 'urgent representations' from Service 'to the effect that the Australian colonies should unite...to bring about the annexation of these islands.' Lord Derby, 1 August 1883, *Ibid*; A.H. Palmer to Lord Derby, 16 June 1883, New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 20.

<sup>97</sup> Queensland's lack of concern contrast sharply with the Victorian example, whereby public concern was widespread and was openly voiced at several well-attended meetings.

<sup>98</sup> 'Endymion', 'Light and Shade', *Queenslander*, 21 July 1883; 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 11 August 1883.

<sup>99</sup> On the 27th July Mcllwraith telegraphed Service and directed him to assume the role of convenor for the Convention, citing the pending General Election as his reason for withdrawal. 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith at Bundaberg', *Queenslander*, 11 August 1883; 'The Premier at Mount Perry', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883; 'Intercolonial News. Victoria', *Queenslander*, 4 August 1883; Mcllwraith to Service, 27 July 1883, Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea and the Administration of the Protectorate, PRV7192/1/1 QSA.

expedient to take any action' against the Imperial Government's decision.<sup>100</sup> Alternatively, Griffith seized the opportunity to link McIlwraith with Queensland's discomfiture at being the focus of Imperial and humanitarian scrutiny.<sup>101</sup> Griffith's published election manifesto referred to the annexation as the '[i]ll-advised and precipitate action of the Government, which...has certainly not tended to advance the reputation of the public men of Queensland.'<sup>102</sup> At a public meeting at Town Hall Griffith detailed more fully his criticism:

Lately we had heard a good deal about the annexation of New Guinea. That was a matter in which the Premier had been going to cover himself with glory. He (Mr. Griffith) was afraid he had only succeeded in covering himself with ridicule, and he was afraid he would also bring ridicule upon Australia....[W]e were told that the Premier had not consulted Parliament for fear it would have thwarted him. Did he suppose the hands of the Imperial Government were going to be forced by such a man as Sir Thomas McIlwraith?....Now this matter was to be the foundation of a movement for the federation of the Australian colonies. He desired to see federation; but he hoped that when we set about it we would do so in a sensible manner, and not make ourselves ridiculous in the eyes of the world. A Sydney newspaper had recently referred to Sir Thomas McIlwraith and his colleagues as men who had run away from their policy and contemptuously said, "These are the men who presume to take the load in Australian federation".<sup>103</sup>

The *Queenslander* was 'sorry to notice' the Liberal's proclivity to 'sneer' at the federal proposal and hoped that it was 'merely a temporary symptom of party exasperation.'<sup>104</sup> The dynamics of Queensland's turbulent political environment had intensified the immediacy of local matters, and this had effectively barred the development of a broader appreciation of the external security concerns and the associated necessity or desirability for collective action. Within this context, as the

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<sup>100</sup> Griffith's hesitancy to comment on the New Guinea issue continued after the announcement of the Imperial Government's repudiation it was reported that 'Mr. Griffith would not enter into the matter at that time.' 'Our Brisbane Letter', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1883; Griffith to A. Archer 4 July 1883, cited in Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 89.

<sup>101</sup> Griffith had decided that 'it would not be expedient to take any action with reference to the refusal of the Imperial Government to ratify the attempted annexation.'

<sup>102</sup> S.W. Griffith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Queenslander*, 4 August 1883.

<sup>103</sup> 'Mr. Griffith at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

<sup>104</sup> 'The New Guinea Convention', *Queenslander*, 1 September 1883.

*Queenslander* noted, 'Federation [wa]s not a word to conjure with in Queensland.'<sup>105</sup>

Queensland's indifference to the idea of federal union was not the only impedient that confronted the Victorian Premier James Service in his endeavour to convene an Intercolonial Convention 'to take federate action on the annexation question'.<sup>106</sup> Prior to Mcllwraith's July abdication of the 'honour' of being the convenor of the Convention there existed ominous signs from New South Wales.<sup>107</sup> In a letter to the Editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a New South Wales parliamentarian, L.F. Heydon<sup>108</sup> questioned Victoria's enthusiasm for federation:

Some persons say that federation of these colonies must come some day. That day will reveal its own necessities; for the present, would not even such persons say, let us wait until Sydney is so far larger than Melbourne that, after the union, a Victorian majority cannot take the capitalship away from Sydney, or a slice of territory, or half of our unsold lands, or alter our railway rates so as to draw wool to Melbourne? Victoria is in such a hurry. And all on a sudden, too....And why does she not apply the grand and lofty idea of Australian federation to other Australian colonies, say Tasmania...or South Australia? Could it be because Tasmania was poor, and small, and had sold all her land, that federation with her was not nobis. So much for the shallow device of Australian federation, conceived, when it came to suit their turn, by Victorian cleverness and audacity, addressed not quite unsuccessfully to New South Wales gullibility and sentiment.<sup>109</sup>

The notion of federation as essentially a Victorian plot was a recurrent theme in New South Wales' consideration of the federal proposal and arguably Mcllwraith's

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<sup>105</sup> 'Endymion', 'Light and Shade', *Queenslander*, 24 November 1883.

<sup>106</sup> 'Intercolonial News. Victoria', *Queenslander*, 4 August 1883.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Louis Francis Heydon (1848-1918) Lawyer and politician. First elected to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly in 1882 as the Member for Yass. Appointed Minister for Justice in the Robertson Ministry in December 1885 but resigned in February 1886 in protest to the proposed introduction of property tax. In 1889 was nominated to the Legislative Council. Heydon remained suspicious of Victoria and was a bitter opponent of Federation. J.M. Bennet and Martha Rutledge, 'Charles Gilbert and Louis Francis Heydon', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 9 (1891-1939): 277-278.

<sup>109</sup> Queensland had applauded Service's 'most decided' support of Mcllwraith's proposal and his subsequent action on the matter but by November an element of uneasiness had entered into the discussion on federation. 'Endymion' in his column 'Light and Shade' declared that 'the only real enthusiasts for federation just now are the Victorians, and some little discontent must be made before accepting even their fervour.' L.F.

withdrawal did nothing to ameliorate the situation. At this tentative stage it was the pressures of political survival that directly fashioned New South Wales' participation.<sup>110</sup>

The defeat of Parkes' ministry in January 1883, after the unusually long tenure of four years, instituted an unstable phase in New South Wales' politics. The next four years saw, as Parkes depicted it, 'the birth and death of four Ministries'.<sup>111</sup> Throughout 1883, the preoccupation of the government formed under Alex Stuart was the extensive overhaul of New South Wales' land legislation. While Stuart had agreed to attend the 'Convention of delegates' his equivocation on the date for the meeting was perceived as New South Wales' 'cold and impassive' position on the annexation and federal issues.<sup>112</sup> Time constraints were a significant contributive factor: unlike his Victorian counterpart, Stuart's local political position did not afford him the time or political freedom to actively pursue an annexationist policy or the federal idea. Second, but interrelated and reflective of the broader New South Wales position, Stuart acknowledged that he did not have that 'same impulsive spirit' on the annexation issue and differed from Service on the best mode of meeting the 'threatened evil' in the New Hebrides.<sup>113</sup> Stuart contended that an Australian-directed annexation of the New Hebrides would be a 'direct violation' of the agreement between Britain and France, which precluded either taking

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Heydon, 'Federation – Colonial or Imperial?', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1883; *Queenslander*, 24 November 1883.

<sup>110</sup> New South Wales' resentment towards Victoria, as evidenced in Heydon's letter, Donald Gordon argued may have been a contributing factor in New South Wales' hesitancy to take up the federal idea for the Mother colony would not have been enthused at being the seconder of a proposal advanced by its offshoots. Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 187.

<sup>111</sup> Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*. 407.

<sup>112</sup> Stuart to Service, 8 September 1883, 'Questions Respecting Annexation in the Pacific', Confidential Print Australia, CO 881/6 AJCP.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

possession of the group islands.<sup>114</sup> On the New Guinea question he was 'strongly impressed' with Britain's proposal to establish a Protectorate and on the 'necessity for immediate Federation action' Stuart openly declared that he did not hold 'strong views' on the question.<sup>115</sup> In essence, Stuart was content to leave external matters for the Imperial Government to take the action it deemed necessary.

A more forthright example of 'loyalist' reverence for Imperial authority was demonstrated by Tasmania's Premier William Giblin who questioned whether 'it was wise, or even becoming, to assume a semi-hostile position to the Imperial Authorities'.<sup>116</sup> The provisional intimations of 'partial separation from the mother-country' enmeshed in Queensland's initial response to the New Guinea decision, had troubled the conformist Giblin.<sup>117</sup> The actions outlined in McIlwraith's memorandum were consequently seen as 'going too fast and too far' for him.<sup>118</sup> Further he objected to any subordination of Imperial interests by the colonies.<sup>119</sup> Tasmania, the *Queenslander* declared was 'quite content to look out, like an unfledged young one, from the safe shelter of the ancestral nest'.<sup>120</sup> The disparate reaction among the colonies to the question of colonial annexation made Service's achievement of assembling delegates from all of the Australian colonies, New

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<sup>114</sup> Confirmation of this agreement between France and Britain resulted in all of the colonies, except Western Australia, withdrawing their support of Service's campaign to have the islands of the New Hebrides annexed. *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Giblin to McIlwraith, 30 July 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 36.

<sup>117</sup> Whilst there existed some commentary in the English press on what the impact of the decision would be on the Australian colonies relationship with Britain the *Pall Mall Gazette* concluded that it was 'moonshine to suppose that the refusal...will seriously estrange the colonies from the mother-country.' 'The Annexation Question', *Queenslander* 14 July 1883; 'The Premier's Statement on New Guinea', *Queenslander*, 7 July 1883.

<sup>118</sup> Giblin to McIlwraith, 30 July 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 36.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> 'The New Guinea Question', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

Zealand and Fiji in Sydney in late November 1883 to consider the federal issue, a masterpiece of negotiation.

The variously entitled 'Anti-Convict', 'Annexation', 'Australasian' or 'Federation' Convention was touted by the New South Wales Premier Alex Stuart as being 'one of the greatest occasions that have yet been recorded in the annals of these infant countries'.<sup>121</sup> The magnitude of this assembly was that it constituted the first intercolonial meeting convened specifically to consider the federal topic. Though eulogised as 'the most important thing...that has yet taken place in Australia' and celebrated as the 'starting point' of the federal movement, it was however plagued from the beginning with the familiar irritants of suspicion and indifference.<sup>122</sup> Despite the location of the Convention being shifted from Melbourne to Sydney to accommodate the parliamentary labours of New South Wales and to 'assure' New South Wales that Victoria's federal enthusiasm was neither 'selfish' nor designed to 'entrap', it was evident that there existed lingering uneasiness in the host colony over the Convention.<sup>123</sup>

New South Wales did little to hide its enmity to the purpose of the Convention. It failed to extend the courtesy of meeting the various colonial premiers on their arrival in Sydney and this 'considerably chagrined' the intercolonial delegates.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, the colony's contingent was ill prepared for the Convention's work, and voiced its animosity by contesting the 'trifling issue' of whether the title 'Convention' should be given to the gathering and by openly accusing Victoria as

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<sup>121</sup> 'The Anti-Convict Convention', *Argus*, 26 November 1883; 'Current News', *Queenslander*, 8 December 1883; 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 1 December 1883; 'By a Bohemian', 'Odd Notes', *Week*, 8 December 1883; 'Picnic to the Delegates', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1883.

<sup>122</sup> 'Editorial', *Times*, 19 January 1884.

using the forum as ‘an indirect process to take possession of the Riverina, and force her tariff on the eastern colonies’.<sup>125</sup> Service, in an attempt to appease, successfully nominated Stuart as Chairman of the Convention and deferred from replying to the provocative speech of New South Wales’ Colonial Treasurer, George Dibbs.<sup>126</sup> An additional conciliatory measure was the listing of the colonies alphabetically rather than by the standard population method.<sup>127</sup> New South Wales’ apprehensiveness was seemingly tempered by the actual work of the gathering; the Melbourne *Argus* claimed that ‘by the third day the New South Wales mind is convinced that after all, Victoria is not playing a deep game.’<sup>128</sup> Differences in opinion on the annexation question and the federal idea were a fateful feature of the Convention, as each colony’s position had been made known in the lengthy negotiation process, all except Queensland.

The colonial decision to alter the number of delegates to attend the Convention was problematic for Queensland’s conservatives. To endorse the ‘importance of the present occasion’ and in line with the precedent set by Canada’s federal process, both Service and McIlwraith had advocated that four delegates be

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<sup>123</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Argus*, 30 November 1883.

<sup>124</sup> ‘The Australasian Convention’, *Argus*, 30 November 1883.

<sup>125</sup> Indicative of the lack of intercolonial contact particularly between the colonial premiers was Service’s admission that the trip to Sydney for the Convention was his first visit to the city after residing in Melbourne for 30 years. Service, *Ibid*; ‘Picnic to the Delegates’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1883.

<sup>126</sup> It was anticipated that Service’s considerable work in organising the Convention after McIlwraith’s withdrawal would justifiably bestow on him the honour of being the Convention’s Chairman but as a matter of courtesy and diplomacy Service advocated that Stuart be elected to the position. An additional and unconcealed effort by Service to lessen the tensions with New South Wales was his speech at a picnic for the delegates organised by the Sydney Chamber of Commerce. One feature of his jovial speech was his strong praise of the ‘beauties of Port Jackson’. ‘I have been over the whole world...and I never saw a harbour more beautiful. In a spirit of emulation and not rivalry...we have made up our minds...to take a sketch...and submit it to the Minister of Public Works in Victoria...and I mean to ask that gentleman if it is not possible...to so alter the formation of the shores of Port Phillip that we can beat this glorious harbour.’ ‘Picnic to the Delegates’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1883; ‘The International Convention’, *Queenslander*, 1 December 1883; ‘The Australasian Convention’ *Argus*, 30 November 1883; Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*: 187.

<sup>127</sup> ‘Minutes of Proceedings of the Intercolonial Convention, 1883, held in Sydney, November to December. First Day’, Federal Council of Australasia: Constitution and First Meeting: Despatches, Correspondence, and Other Papers’, *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 6-7.

<sup>128</sup> ‘The Australasian Convention’ *Argus*, 1 December 1883.



appointed from both sides of each colony's parliament to ensure that the Convention was a 'thoroughly representative' body.<sup>129</sup> All of the colonial governments however voted against this proposal and this resulted in non-selection of members from the parliamentary opposition. The most notable impact of this decision was the non-attendance of the Convention's 'prime mover' Thomas Mcllwraith, who had been defeated by the Liberal leader Samuel Griffith in Queensland's General Election.<sup>130</sup> The absence of Mcllwraith, the 'natural leader' of this important intercolonial gathering, prompted further acclamation of his New Guinea action.<sup>131</sup> The Victorian correspondent to the *Queenslander* emphasised that Mcllwraith, 'must be credited with setting the ball rolling, for the initial step was undoubtedly his'.<sup>132</sup> The *Argus*, extended its expression of regret and requested that 'if etiquette permitted them' it would be 'glad' if a resolution could be passed by the Convention to formally acknowledge Mcllwraith's 'services'.<sup>133</sup> To a member of Queensland's Legislative Council, the absence of Mcllwraith at the Convention equated to 'performing the play of Hamlet with the chief character absent'.<sup>134</sup> In addition to affirming Mcllwraith's designation as the protagonist who had brought the questions of annexation and federation 'within the range of practical politics', his absence introduced an element of uncertainty in regard to Queensland's position on the matters before the Convention.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> A further purpose of assigning the gathering as Convention as opposed to a conference was to differentiate it from the previously unproductive Intercolonial Conferences. Stuart's dissent on the proposal was largely affiliated with his local political situation, for he could not 'justify' the potential 'peril' of being outvoted at the Convention by members of his government's opposition. Service to Stuart, 11 September 1883; Stuart to Service, 18 September 1883, 'Questions respecting Annexation in the Pacific', CO 881/6 Confidential Print Australia, AJCP; 'The Australasian Conference', *Queenslander*, 1 December 1883.

<sup>130</sup> The new Government under Griffith held a comfortable majority of 35 Ministers to the Oppositions 20. 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 1 December 1883; Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 88.

<sup>131</sup> Alfred Deakin, 'And Be One People': *Alfred Deakin's Federal Story*. Introduction by Stuart Macintyre. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995: 11

<sup>132</sup> 'Intercolonial News. Victoria', *Queenslander*, 8 December 1883.

<sup>133</sup> 'The Australasian Convention', *Argus*, 1 December 1883.

Griffith, in his election 'crusade against his rival' McIlwraith, had been critical of the attempted annexation of New Guinea and the reactive federal proposition and this had accordingly raised concerns over Griffith's likely enthusiasm for the purpose of the Convention.<sup>136</sup> Alfred Deakin's summation was that at this point in time Griffith had not developed 'the force and depth of his Federal aspirations.'<sup>137</sup> Thus, while Griffith regarded it as 'extremely fortunate...that the accidents of political life' had placed him a position to be present at the Convention as Queensland's principal representative, the *Brisbane Courier* feared that the efforts of the Convention would be minimised by the 'frigid indifference of the representatives from Queensland'.<sup>138</sup> More optimistic was the Victorian delegation, which had anticipated that they would receive 'the hearty support of Queensland' in their proposed annexation and federal resolutions.<sup>139</sup> The position Griffith proceeded to undertake in the Convention's deliberations was that of an active moderator between the ardour of Victoria and the tentativeness of New South Wales, South Australia, and Tasmania.

Griffith countered, to the disappointment of the *Argus*, Service's resolution, urging the Imperial Government to annex or establish a protectorate over all the islands from New Guinea to the New Hebrides.<sup>140</sup> Griffith advanced a more moderate proposal that confined Imperial action to New Guinea. Debate on the Victorian and Queensland annexation resolutions and Tasmania's more cautious one, revolved

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<sup>134</sup> Hon. K. I. O'Doherty, 'Federal Council of Australasia', 5 August 1884, *QPD*, 42 (1884): 43.

<sup>135</sup> 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 1 December 1883.

<sup>136</sup> 'The Anti-Convict Convention', *Argus*, 26 November 1883.

<sup>137</sup> Deakin, '*And Be One People*': *Alfred Deakin's Federal Story*: 12.

<sup>138</sup> Queensland's second representative was James Garrick Queensland's Postmaster General. *Brisbane Courier*, 27 November 1883, cited in Brown, 'Queensland's Annexationist Ambitions In New Guinea 1859-1884': 88.

<sup>139</sup> 'Editorial', *Argus*, 30 November 1883.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

principally around the diplomatic bearing they would have on the Imperial Government. Most were particularly mindful of the 'extreme delicacy' of the Western Pacific situation, in view of the 1878 'understanding' between Britain and France that neither Government would take possession of the New Hebrides and this effectively barred the Convention from submitting a resolution that sought any 'inconsistent' action from the Imperial authorities.<sup>141</sup> Reverence and loyalty to the British connection also permeated the deliberations. The declared 'main object' of New South Wales was to ensure that 'opinions should be couched in language of statesmanlike moderation, so as to facilitate the action of the Imperial Government, and to prevent its embarrassment with any foreign power'.<sup>142</sup> Griffith was also seen to be 'cautious and prudent', and showed 'a proper appreciation of the difficulties of the Imperial position'.<sup>143</sup> He had in line with this made a 'careful revision of the language used'.<sup>144</sup> It was clear to the *Argus* that:

the colonies are not prepared to go so far as is Victoria....there seems to be a serious lack of unanimity as to the annexation of the isles from New Guinea to the New Hebrides....The idea has been attributed to the delegates who would leave the isles alone, that we should not ask too much from the Earl of Derby.<sup>145</sup>

Arguably, McIlwraith's presence at the Convention would have aided Victoria's stronger line on the annexation issue, although his particularly critical stance on the Imperial Government's repudiation may have been tempered by the

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<sup>141</sup> William Dalley, 'The Intercolonial Convention', Enclosure 2. New South Wales Governor Lord Loftus to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Derby 31 December 1883, 'Federal Council of Australasia: Constitution and First Meeting: Despatches, Correspondence, and Other Papers', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 24; 'Minutes of Proceedings of the Intercolonial Convention, 1883, held in Sydney, November to December. At the Colonial Secretary's Office, Sydney. 4<sup>th</sup> December 1883 (Sixth Day)', *Ibid*: 12-13; 'The Australasian Convention', *Argus*, 3 December 1883.

<sup>142</sup> The *Argus* made particular note of one of New South Wales' delegates, William Dalley whom it believed was 'deeply concerned for the comfort and ease of the Imperial Government, whose repose he has not the heart to disturb. 'The Australasian Convention', *Argus*, 3 December 1883; Dalley, 'The Intercolonial Convention', 24.

<sup>143</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 4 December 1883.

<sup>144</sup> Samuel Griffith, 'The Late Intercolonial Convention', 26 February 1884, *QPD*, 41 (1883-1884): 475-478.

<sup>145</sup> 'Editorial', *Argus*, 1 December 1883.

Convention's conditional endorsement of action over New Guinea.<sup>146</sup> Undermined by Griffith, whose resolutions were seen to 'belittle' the Victorian scheme, Service forcefully reasserted the Victorian position and effectively portrayed the shifting nature of colonial alliances and the enduring suspicion of Victoria:

He urged that Victoria was entitled to large consideration, and the interests of that colony ought not to be overlooked....Victoria now said, "Secure the New Hebrides for us"....which was to them a matter of much greater importance than the annexation of New Guinea. He went on to say that but for the enthusiasm shown by Victoria, and the pressure brought to bear on the question by that colony in connection with Queensland, New Guinea would have been lost, and if Queensland succeeded in getting New Guinea she would be entirely indebted for that success to the other colonies.<sup>147</sup>

The resultant series of eight resolutions on the interconnected issues of annexation and the French convict threat contained Griffith's more moderate New Guinea line. This provoked the *Argus* to comment that the tentativeness of colonies had indicated that the prevailing colonial conviction was 'that there [wa]s some impropriety in a vigorous remonstrance' with the Imperial Government.<sup>148</sup>

The formulation of a colonial response to the disturbing wave of foreign activity in the Pacific was a prominent consideration of the Convention. Yet in the resolutions decided by the Convention no attempt was made to justify Queensland's original action. The resolutions articulated the colonial desire for the Imperial government to institute a forward policy in the Pacific for defensive purposes and not for territorial expansion. This was subsequently perceived as amounting to Australia's

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<sup>146</sup> That Queensland, under Griffith had adopted a more moderate line than would have been expected by McIlwraith's participation was verified by the pro-Liberal weekly the *Week* who argued 'that through the absence of Sir Thomas McIlwraith the Victorian delegates had nobody to back them up in their "high-falutin" demands.' 'By a Bohemian', 'Odd Notes', *Week*, 15 December 1883.

<sup>147</sup> 'The Australasian Convention', *Argus*, 30 November 1883; 'The Intercolonial Convention', *Queenslander*, 8 December 1883.

<sup>148</sup> The *Queenslander* put it more tactfully: 'It appears to be the general impression...that, so far as the Pacific islands are concerned, a unanimous conclusion will be arrived at, though the terms in which such conclusion may be expressed will probably be materially different from those which have up to the present time been indicated.' 'The Intercolonial Convention', *Queenslander*, 8 December 1883; 'Editorial', *Argus*, 3 December 1883.

‘Monroe doctrine over the Western Pacific’.<sup>149</sup> The ‘highly detrimental’ impact of further foreign acquisitions in the Western Pacific to the safety and well-being’ of the colonies was affirmed, but the Convention refrained from ‘suggesting’ any steps to be undertaken by the Imperial government. It was the colonies ‘confident belief that the Imperial Government will promptly adopt the wisest and most effectual measures for securing the safety and contentment of this portion of Her Majesty’s dominions.’ The Convention was however, ‘emphatically of the opinion’ that New Guinea should be immediately incorporated into the British Empire, with the costs defrayed by the colonies. ‘In the strongest manner’ the colonies protested against France’s intention to transport relapsed criminals to the Pacific Islands and as a result urged the Imperial Government to ‘use every means in its power to prevent the adoption of this course.’ Additionally the Convention ‘invites’ the Imperial Government ‘to make such serious recommendations on this subject as may be deemed expedient’. These resolutions were communicated to the Secretary of State for the Colonies with the ‘request...for such action as Her Majesty may think proper to direct, with a view to giving effect to the earnest desire of her loyal subjects in Australasia.’<sup>150</sup> Pacific concerns had taken precedence in the Convention’s proceedings and it was not until the seventh day of the Convention that Griffith’s resolution on the desirability of creating a Federal Australasian Council was presented for serious debate.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Lord Derby, Minute of an Interview with the Agent Generals of New South Wales, New Zealand, Queensland and Victoria, 2 July 1884 cited in Tate, ‘The Australasian Monroe Doctrine: Genesis of the Doctrine,’ 279.

<sup>150</sup> ‘Minutes of Proceedings of the Intercolonial Convention’, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1883 (Sixth Day)’, *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 12-13.

<sup>151</sup> Griffith had given notice of his resolution on federation on the second day of the Convention and on Day four it was presented again and sent to a Committee ‘to consider and report upon the best mode of constituting the council’ debate on the issue was consequently postponed. ‘Minutes of Proceedings of the Intercolonial Convention’, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1883 (Sixth Day)’, *Ibid*: 8,10.

In contrast to all previous colonial considerations of the federal question, the Convention proceeded through the debate and amendment phase of its deliberations on the Federal resolutions and the 'Draft Bill to constitute a Federal Council of Australasia' at a 'rapid rate' and achieved a 'remarkable unanimity among the delegates.'<sup>152</sup> The explanation for this uncharacteristic colonial consensus centres on the narrowness of the federal objective and the resultant prescriptive nature of the proposed federal scheme.

The establishment of some permanent form of federal organisation was a mandatory feature of the Convention's work; it was not only the professed reason for the gathering but it was an essential requirement to fulfil Lord Derby's recommendation that 'if the Australian colonies desired an extension of their territory, it would be better for them to become federated, as they were unable singly to accomplish the task.'<sup>153</sup> The 'general tenor' therefore of the Convention was that if the colonies presented 'an unbroken front...all their reasonable demands would be conceded.'<sup>154</sup> Delegates consequently spoke 'with hope and confidence of the prospect of establishing some central body which shall *at least symbolise* a united Australia.'<sup>155</sup> Motivated by 'practical expediency' and symbolism the Convention initiated and adopted a federal scheme that deliberately attempted to evade the problematical aspects of Australia's entrenched model of colonial individualism and independence.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 December 1883; 'Minutes of Proceedings of the Intercolonial Convention', 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1883 (Ninth Day)', *Ibid*: 14-16; 'The Australasian Convention', *Argus*, 1 December 1883.

<sup>153</sup> 'Annexation of New Guinea – Ministerial Statement', *QPD*, 39 (1883): 89.

<sup>154</sup> 'Summary for Europe', *Argus*, 5 December 1883.

<sup>155</sup> 'Editorial', *Argus*, 3 December 1883. Italics added.

<sup>156</sup> 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 December 1883.

The blueprint from which the Convention, and Griffith in particular, drew substantial inspiration was Sir Henry Parkes' 'abandoned' 1881 Federal Council proposal.<sup>157</sup> At an Intercolonial conference in Sydney, Parkes had submitted a memorandum that, in essence, had argued that because Australian conditions were not then conducive to the construction of a complete federation, a more refined body 'to meet the circumstances of the present Australian situation' should be established.<sup>158</sup> This would 'lead men to think in the direction of federation, and accustom the public mind to federal ideas and....pave the way to complete federal organisation.'<sup>159</sup> For practical purposes Parkes' logic was adopted by the Convention who 'recognising that the time has not yet arrived at which a complete Federal Union of the Australasian Colonies can be attained' proceeded to submit 'provisions *best adapted to secure...*[what] is now capable of attainment.'<sup>160</sup> Unanimous agreement was the principal objective and the overarching challenge had been to mediate a federal framework that would be acceptable to all the colonies. The resultant draft bill for a Federal Council, composed of two representatives from each colony and established to deal biannually 'with such matters of common Australasian interest', did in effect reveal the extent of colonial

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<sup>157</sup> Parkes had first given support to the idea of a Federal Council in 1867 and had presented his more formulated version in 1881 but within a few months of his proposal he abandoned the scheme as 'a thing that must prove abortive upon trial'. Parkes considered the 1883 derivative of his proposal as such 'they have simply disfigured the bill, and presented it as a copy of mine....It is a very imperfect measure.' Griffith's significant role in drafting the Federal resolutions and the Federal Council Bill was well acknowledged as was his involvement in the revision of the bill after a Committee had considered the bill. The *Argus* for example declared that 'Mr. Griffith rushed to the front with resolutions for the establishment of a federal council, and the Victorian delegates joyfully made way for him.' Parkes, 'Federation of the Colonies', 30 October 1884, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, *NSWPD*, 15 (1883/84): 6192; 'The Australasian Convention', *Argus*, 8 December 1883; Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 90; Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*: 583-85.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Victoria's Agent General Robert Murray-Smith commented on Parkes' abandonment of the Federal Council ideal during a lecture he presented to the Royal Colonial Institute in February 1884 were: 'One prominent Australian leader indeed has lately pointed out, through the medium of a public journal, how, after passing abstract resolutions in favour of Federation...he shrank from the task of giving practical effect to his own propositions. Murray-Smith, 'The Australian Dominion,' 105-40; Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*: 584.

<sup>160</sup> 'Minutes of Proceedings of the Intercolonial Convention', 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1883 (Ninth Day)', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 14. Italics added.

independence and the consequent misgivings of the federal principle yet simultaneously represented the first tangible advance on the federal question.<sup>161</sup>



**Figure 4.1: *Queensland Punch*, 1 January 1884**

Within Australia's firmly entrenched pattern of colonial separatism the independence and authority of each colonial legislature was sacrosanct and accordingly represented the principal hurdle to be negotiated if agreement was to be reached. Thus, to negate colonial apprehension the 'greatest care' was taken to preserve the independence of the local Legislatures.<sup>162</sup> The preamble of the draft Federal Council Bill expressly specified that 'such matters', which required 'united action', were only those that could be dealt with 'without unduly interfering

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*: 14-15.



with the management of the internal affairs of the several Colonies by their respective Legislatures'.<sup>163</sup> To reinforce this assurance the Council's 'functions, powers, and authority' were clearly 'defined' and the proposed 'matters of general interest' were 'specified' and 'subject to the provisions' contained in the Act.<sup>164</sup> The consequent prescriptive nature of the draft Bill indicated to the *Sydney Morning Herald* that what had been suggested was:

rather a Federal Council in name than in reality; for it is not proposed that there shall be any central organisation with taxing powers, or with legislative powers, that can override the local governments already established. What is now proposed...is...a sort of joint committee...to exercise certain strictly prescribed duties'.<sup>165</sup>

The inherent paradox of the enforced adaptation of the federal principal was that to obtain endorsement of the plan to create a central legislative body, the Convention was compelled to acknowledge and preserve the sanctity of each colony's colonial legislature. Thus the two fundamentally antithetical principles of colonial independence and federalism coexisted in the draft Federal Council Bill to offset anxiety, facilitate colonial agreement and accomplish the 'first step' towards a complete federal union of the colonies.<sup>166</sup> The 'beginning' was purposefully 'not very ambitious', but it was a calculated and practical recognition of the colonial situation.<sup>167</sup> The proposed Federal Council was positively acknowledged as an

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<sup>162</sup> Dalley, 'The Intercolonial Convention', 'Federal Council of Australasia: Constitution and First Meeting: Despatches, Correspondence, and Other Papers', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 24.

<sup>163</sup> 'Minutes of Proceedings of the Intercolonial Convention', 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1883 (Ninth Day)', *Ibid*: 14.

<sup>164</sup> Power was given to legislate upon a variety of matters of common interest such as –The relations of Australasia with the Islands of the Pacific; prevention of the influx of criminals; fisheries; service of civil processes of the Courts; enforcement of judgements and criminal processes beyond the limits of the colony concerned, and the extradition of offenders. Following matters may be referred to the council by the Legislatures of any two or more Colonies –General Defences, Quarantine, Patents of invention and discovery, Copyrights, Bills of Exchange and Promissory Notes, Uniformity of Weights and Measures, recognition in other Colonies of any Marriage or Divorce, Naturalisation and Aliens, Status of Corporations and Joint Stock Companies in other Colonies and other matter of general Australasian interest. *Ibid*: 15.

<sup>165</sup> 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 December 1883.

<sup>166</sup> 'Editorial', *Argus*, 5 December 1883.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*.

‘impotent body’ with no executive authority.<sup>168</sup> It was therefore a ‘burlesque’ of the federal principle but it was purposely so because, as the Tasmanian Premier William Giblin remarked, it had to soothe ‘the susceptibilities of every local Legislature; letting them feel...that the 21 leading men whom they have selected to represent them would not...lose sight of the interests of any local Legislature in the Australasian group.’<sup>169</sup> A ‘slight attachment’ was manifestly all that was intended or in fact all that could be expected at this point in time.<sup>170</sup> Its anticipated broader contribution, the *Argus* declared, was that ‘it sets the colonies travelling upon the road to union, and turns them away from the path which some of them have seemed to prefer, and the end of which is disintegration.’<sup>171</sup>

Despite the evident disparity between the adopted federal scheme and McIlwraith’s initial federal proposal for a ‘combination among the Australian colonies...for both legislative and executive purposes’, the overarching assessment of the Federal Bill was positive.<sup>172</sup> The Convention was consequently lauded as producing ‘the greatest work done since Captain Cook discovered the land’ and as being ‘far more successful than was anticipated by many’.<sup>173</sup> A degree of scepticism had prevailed throughout the Convention’s sittings for it was feared that ‘local jealousies and rival ambitions were still too strong to prevent anything being done’.<sup>174</sup> Localism had been a persistent and obstructive force at

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<sup>168</sup> ‘The Australasian Convention’, *Argus*, 8 December 1883.

<sup>169</sup> W.R. Piddington, ‘Federation: New Guinea’, 9 July 1884, *NSWPD*, 14 (1883/84): 4260; ‘Banquet To the Convention Delegates’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 December 1883.

<sup>170</sup> ‘The Australasian Convention’, *Argus*, 3 December 1883.

<sup>171</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Argus*, 5 December 1883.

<sup>172</sup> ‘Extract from the Minutes of Proceedings of the Executive Council of Queensland’, 17 July 1883, ‘New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration’, *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*, 1 (1886): 33

<sup>173</sup> Graham Berry, *Argus*, 11 December 1883 cited in Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*: 189; ‘What the Convention Did’, *Week*, 15 December 1883.

<sup>174</sup> Illustrative of the degree of public scepticism surrounding the Convention was the *Argus* reporter’s comment that ‘it was no doubt believed by many persons, when the convention was proposed, that the various

Intercolonial Conferences, the colonies' customary consultative forum, and on almost all previous occasions had barred the establishment of any permanent agreement between the colonies. The Convention's decision not to make its deliberations public, through its exclusion of the press, precludes a definitive assessment of the actual impact of localism on the proceedings. Leaked reports from delegates did indicate that at the commencement of the Convention there were 'some extremely anxious moments....More than once...the delegates were on the point of an explosion'.<sup>175</sup> Under Stuart's directorship these initial tensions, principally generated by New South Wales' aversion to Victoria, 'thawed' and fostered an environment which enabled the idea of the Federal Council to be taken up 'most heartily' by all 'even the New South Wales delegates'.<sup>176</sup> There was, Service reported, 'less difficulty' in dealing with the Federal proposal than there had been with annexation issue.<sup>177</sup> Ostensibly, the Convention's 'historical circumstances' and the delegate's unanimous desire to 'extend our vision' had effectively removed many of the antagonisms attributable to localism.<sup>178</sup> Conciliation at significant or festive intercolonial gatherings was seemingly a recurrent trait: it had been the source of scepticism at the Albury celebrations, when it was generically argued that under the influence of enthusiastic gatherings 'many antagonisms lie dormant', but on the representative's return to their 'own political atmosphere', 'adverse views' were revived with increased force.<sup>179</sup> The applicability of this line of argument was further corroborated by the state of affairs that immediately followed the Sydney Convention, which encapsulated the

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colonial Ministers were merely providing themselves with a convenient holiday.' 'What the Convention Did', *Week*, 15 December 1883.

<sup>175</sup> 'Notes About the Convention', *Argus*, 10 December 1883.

<sup>176</sup> 'Banquet to the Convention Delegates', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 December 1883.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> William Dalley, 'Picnic to the Delegates', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1883.

<sup>179</sup> 'The Intercolonial Banquet', *Queenslander*, 23 June 1883.

causative factors that precluded the Federal Council from securing a 'fair trial'.<sup>180</sup> In a speech immediately after the Convention Service prophetically noted the fundamental obstacle: 'we have yet to go through the ordeal of submitting to the respective Parliaments of the various colonies the action we have taken.'<sup>181</sup>

'Ominous signs' from the New South Wales legislature emerged before the Convention had concluded its business.<sup>182</sup> The initial 'grievance' centred on the extent to which the colony's three delegates could be considered representative of the people of New South Wales.<sup>183</sup> This was sufficient evidence for the *Queenslander's* New South Wales correspondent to pre-empt the probable failure of the Federal Council: 'it will be a thousand pities if the important work of this convention is to be utterly thrown away.'<sup>184</sup> Within three days of the Convention's closure a series of indictments had been generated against the Federal proposal. The fervency with which the adversaries submitted their case bordered on the hysterical, with one member of the New South Wales legislature declaring that every member of the Convention would have been 'found guilty of high treason against the constitution of this country.'<sup>185</sup> Chief amongst the charges was the disturbing perception that the Federal Council Bill was being submitted to the Imperial Government for sanction at a 'railroad pace' and before 'this enormous constitutional change...had been discussed by the local legislatures'.<sup>186</sup> Second, it

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<sup>180</sup> John Cockburn, 'Speech in South Australian House of Assembly, 26 June 1890' in Cockburn, *Australian Federation*. 61-71.

<sup>181</sup> 'Banquet to the Convention Delegates', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 December 1883.

<sup>182</sup> 'Intercolonial News. New South Wales', *Queenslander*, 15 December 1883.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> 'Parliament of New South Wales', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 December 1883.

<sup>186</sup> The source of this concern was drawn from two of the federal resolutions. The first stated that the Colonial representatives had pledged themselves to invite their respective Legislature to pass addresses to Her majesty so as to cause the measure to be submitted to the Imperial Government for sanction, the opportunity to amend the was not granted. Second that the Governor of New South Wales was requested to transmit the bill to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 'Minutes of Proceedings of the Intercolonial Convention', 8<sup>th</sup>

was mistakenly believed that the draft bill would invest the Federal Council with 'the power of completely stamping out this parliament and sweeping away our laws' and finally, the New South Wales delegates were accused of consenting to the Federal resolutions and the draft bill without consulting their Parliament.<sup>187</sup> Contributing significantly to the volatility of this 'outburst in the Legislative Assembly' was Service's 'indiscreet speech' at a Melbourne banquet for the Convention's delegates just three days after the Convention ended.<sup>188</sup>

In stark contrast to the diplomatic position Service had essentially undertaken throughout the Convention, his speech to the representatives of Victoria's ministry and the colony's public institutions was, in its first half, an unconcealed denunciation of New South Wales' initial 'ignorance' of the Convention's purpose and of Sydney's 'most intense jealousy' of Melbourne.<sup>189</sup> Service did then proceed to applaud the 'hearty...spirit' with which the New South Wales delegates undertook the Federal initiative, crediting each of them with significant contributions to the final result and concluding by calling for 'three hearty cheers for our friends of New South Wales'.<sup>190</sup> The 'overweening impertinence' of the first half of Service's speech was reported to have 'almost dr[iven] the Sydney people mad'.<sup>191</sup> A 'considerable quantity of bitterness' was as a result infused into the already antagonistic rivalry between New South Wales and Victoria.<sup>192</sup> The retort

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December, 1883 (Tenth Day)', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 17; 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 December 1883.

<sup>187</sup> 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 December 1883; 'Parliament of New South Wales', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 December 1883.

<sup>188</sup> New South Wales Governor Lord Loftus to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Derby 31 December 1883, Federal Council of Australasia: Constitution and First Meeting: Despatches, Correspondence, and Other Papers', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 20-21.

<sup>189</sup> 'Banquet to the Convention Delegates', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 December 1883.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> 'Parliament of New South Wales', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 December 1883; Quote cited in Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*: 189.

<sup>192</sup> Deakin, 'And Be One People': *Alfred Deakin's Federal Story*: 16-17.

of one member of the New South Wales legislature was that Service's statement on Sydney's 'intense jealousy' was 'as false as Hades was black' because:

there was no jealousy in this colony about Melbourne, for we have nothing to be jealous of....It was going something beyond endurance when they were told that Victoria did this and that, and she in fact posed before the world as the leading colony of the Australian group, which she was not. New South Wales was as far above her as the heavens were above the earth.<sup>193</sup>

Service's 'irreparable blunder' galvanised New South Wales' 'natural tendency' to view with suspicion anything endorsed by Victoria.<sup>194</sup> The 'worst' effect of this, Deakin asserted, was that the 'Federal Council became branded as a Victorian invention. As such it became a point of patriotism with many New South Welshmen to belittle and oppose it.'<sup>195</sup> At its most extreme the Federal Council was perceived by New South Wales as a 'conspiracy between Victoria and Queensland' and moreover it was argued that '[i]t ought not to be forgotten that if we...get this federal council saddled upon us we shall never be able to get rid of it without bloodshed.'<sup>196</sup> The continued maintenance of a majority opinion against the Federal proposal in the New South Wales legislature resulted in the colony never participating in the Federal Council. The 'non-conformity' of New South Wales irrevocably weakened the Federal Council from its inception, for it prevented the Council from being a truly representative body of all the Australian colonies and consequently it lacked the 'prestige necessary for its effective existence'.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> 'Parliament of New South Wales', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 December 1883

<sup>194</sup> Deakin, 'And Be One People': *Alfred Deakin's Federal Story*: 16; 'The Australasian Convention', *Argus*, 8 December 1883.

<sup>195</sup> Deakin, 'And Be One People': *Alfred Deakin's Federal Story*. 16-17

<sup>196</sup> J. Stewart, 'Federation: New Guinea', 23 July 1884, *NSWPD*, 14 (1883/84): 4495.

<sup>197</sup> John Cockburn, 'The Commonwealth of Australia', Cockburn, *Australian Federation*: 29.

Paradoxically, as the unity of the colonies was collapsing Britain was under the erroneous perception that a full federation had been agreed to by the Convention. A telegram had been mistakenly sent without the words 'not yet' and subsequently read 'That this Convention, recognises that the time has arrived at which a complete Federal Union of the Australasian Colonies can be attained'.<sup>198</sup> The English press published this version and as a result of this 'extraordinary mistake' Imperial action on New Guinea was temporarily stalled. Lord Derby, based on this 'misunderstanding', resolved that if the Australian colonies were about to federate and assume their own authority then the Imperial Government would 'do nothing with a view to the annexation of New Guinea until Australia was federated'.<sup>199</sup> The Convention's resolutions pertaining to the annexation question were generally considered by the British press as being 'moderate and careful' yet privately Derby considered them to be 'mere raving' and Gladstone thought them 'preposterous proposals'.<sup>200</sup> In Derby's consistent attempt to arbitrate a cautious course on the Pacific question he was, at this time, aided by the slowness with which the Australian colonies proceeded to submit the Convention's federal resolutions to their respective parliaments. Derby therefore argued, in May 1884 that in the 'absence of joint action by the colonies' there existed no grounds for a reconsideration of the annexation question and this strategically transferred the initiative back onto the colonies.<sup>201</sup> As 'further delay seem[ed] unavoidable', Derby was 'disposed' to arrange during the intervening period for a High Commissioner to be stationed with 'large powers of independent action' on the eastern coast of

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<sup>198</sup> Griffith, 'The Late Intercolonial Convention', 26 February 1884, *QPD*, 41 (1883-84): 477.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> 'European News by Electric Cable', *Queenslander*, 15 December 1883; Derby to Gladstone, 7 December 1883; Gladstone to Derby, 8 December 1883 cited in Tate, 'The Australasian Monroe Doctrine: Genesis of the Doctrine,' 277-78

New Guinea if the colonies would contribute £15,000 to the cost of this arrangement.<sup>202</sup> Though presented in the context of a response to the Convention's resolutions on the Pacific, Derby's proposal to extend the authority of the Western Pacific High Commission over New Guinea had its origins in the recommendations of the October 1883 report from the Western Pacific Royal Commission.<sup>203</sup> To affect a more rigorous standard of supervision over the labour trade was the basis of the Commission's recommendations, delivered in direct response to Queensland's attempted annexation of New Guinea and the associated increase in recruitment activity in these waters.<sup>204</sup> Derby's proposal was not therefore an anticipatory action waiting for a broader annexation policy; on this front his 'immovable placidity' remained.<sup>205</sup> To ease colonial apprehension Derby reaffirmed the Imperial Government's 'confident' belief that 'no foreign Power contemplated interference with New Guinea'.<sup>206</sup> The inaccuracy of the Foreign Office's assessment of German designs in the Pacific proved to be the catalyst that finally effected a decisive change in the Imperial Government's consideration of the Pacific question. In response to the changing dynamics in Pacific the colonial need for combined or federal action was sharply impressed upon the Australian colonies. A secondary though more durable impact of Germany's Pacific exploits was the contemporary and historical elevation of McIlwraith's bold annexation action.

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<sup>201</sup> Lord Derby to the Governors of the Australian Colonies, 9 May 1884, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 45-46.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> 'Report of the Western Pacific Royal Commission', *QVP*, 2 (1884): 962.

<sup>204</sup> The association between Queensland's annexation of New Guinea and Queensland's recruitment in the region is discussed in Chapter 3. *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 221.

<sup>206</sup> Derby to the Governors of the Australian Colonies, 9 May 1884, *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 45.



In June 1884, the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck publicly announced Germany's intention to pursue a government-endorsed policy of granting protection over the nation's commercial interests on the African coast and in the Pacific.<sup>207</sup> In view of the Foreign Office's persistent assertion that Germany did not hold expansionist ambitions in the Pacific, Bismarck's declaration though it did not specifically cite New Guinea was received with surprise and alarm. Derby immediately advocated action and proposed the establishment of a protectorate over eastern New Guinea. Cabinet approved this on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1884. This decision was reversed three days later after Germany's ambassador in London, Count Munster had acquainted British Foreign Secretary Lord Granville with Germany's undertaking to maintain and extend its presence into the northern portion of New Guinea under the conviction that it was a legitimate 'field for German enterprise'.<sup>208</sup> In the subsequent negotiation phase over boundaries Britain was restricted by broader issues, in particular its requirement to maintain congenial relations with Germany to ensure support for its ongoing and deteriorating action in Egypt.<sup>209</sup> The geographical limitation of Britain's protectorate in New Guinea was as a consequence restricted to the southeastern portion of the island.

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<sup>207</sup> Jacobs, 'Bismarck and the Annexation of New Guinea,' 14-26.

<sup>208</sup> Granville to Lord Derby, 15 August 1884, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 48-49.

<sup>209</sup> An indication of Britain's eagerness to satisfy German requirements was provided by Munster. In reply to Granville's letter which inform Munster that Britain would only extend its authority over 'that part of island which specially interests the Australian colonies' and that Britain had 'no desire to oppose the extension of German colonisation' Munster acknowledged Britain's congeniality 'I shall go to Berlin soon after my arrival in Germany and I shall do all in my power to indicated...how really friendly the feeling England is towards Germany in this.' Derby in a private letter to Granville later noted that 'I am sorry we can do no more for Australia, but agree that the question of Egypt overrides all others.' Munster cited in Jacobs, 'Bismarck and the Annexation of New Guinea': Fn 40,22; Derby to Granville 6 March 1885, cited in Jacobs, 'The Colonial Office and New Guinea, 1874-1884,' 117; Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 242-43; Jacobs, 'Bismarck and the Annexation of New Guinea': 20-23.

To the Australian colonies, uninformed of the diplomatic reasons for the protectorate's establishment and its reduced territorial boundaries, the October intimation that a protectorate was to be proclaimed was received as a surprise shift in the Imperial Government's position. Its limited scope was to Griffith a satisfactory 'first step towards carrying out the resolutions of the convention with regard to New Guinea'.<sup>210</sup> To Service, the more insistent advocate of a broader annexationist policy, the decision was a bitter disappointment for its limitation laid the northern portion open for German occupation.<sup>211</sup> Bismarck, acting 'outside the negotiations that were going on', had in fact proceeded to implement Service's forecast of events.

In a telegram sent on the 19<sup>th</sup> August Bismarck forwarded his instructions to the German Consul-General in Sydney. The German explorer Dr Otto Finsch left Sydney in September and proceeded to carry out these instructions 'to hoist the German flag in the archipelago of New Britain and along...the northeast coast of New Guinea which lies outside the sphere of interest of Holland and England.'<sup>212</sup> Throughout October and November suspicion and anxiety mounted in Australia, as the colonies pieced together, through information gleaned principally from foreign sources, that the Imperial government had ignored their concerns and appeals to placate Germany. The November proclamation of the protectorate was consequently stigmatised by McIlwraith as a 'mere sham' and by Service as a

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<sup>210</sup> Notation by Griffith on Service's telegram to Griffith 10 October 1884 cited in Primrose, 'Other Factors in the Annexation of South Eastern New Guinea': 81.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*; Brown, 'Queensland's Annexationist Ambitions In New Guinea 1859-1884': 102-03.

<sup>212</sup> Finsch left Sydney in September in the *Samoa* to carry out these instructions and was joined in this enterprise by the German warships the *Hyana* that left Sydney on 23<sup>rd</sup> September and the *Elizabeth* in early October. The northeastern portion annexed by Germany Finsch called Kaiser Wilhelmsland. Granville to Gladstone, 23 December 1884 cited in Jacobs, 'Bismarck and the Annexation of New Guinea': 24; Bismarck to the Consul General of the German Empire in Sydney, 19 August 1884 cited in Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 244; Moore, *New Guinea: Crossing Boundaries and History*. 143.

‘farce’.<sup>213</sup> In contrast, both Griffith and Stuart maintained their faith in the Imperial government to display ‘a most friendly spirit towards the Australian colonies in their desire to incorporate New Guinea within the British Empire.’<sup>214</sup> Early warnings of Finsch’s objective in the Pacific were dismissed, but the full extent of his activities and that of two German warships were reported to the Admiralty by Commodore Erskine on 17<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>215</sup> Formal notification from Germany was received two days later. The Australian colonies received unconfirmed reports from a special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* at New Britain on the same day.<sup>216</sup> Hugh Romilly, the Deputy Commissioner of the Western Pacific stationed in New Guinea, aware of ‘the wholesale German annexations’, accurately anticipated on 13<sup>th</sup> December that the Australian colonies will ‘no doubt...be furious’.<sup>217</sup>

McIlwraith considered the news of Germany’s annexation of northeastern New Guinea as exemplifying ‘the grossest piece of treachery on the part of the English Government to the colonies that has ever been perpetrated.’<sup>218</sup> The target for the

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<sup>213</sup> McIlwraith, ‘Annexation of New Guinea’, 26 November 1884, *QPD*, 44 (1884): 1579; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 December 1884.

<sup>214</sup> Griffith, ‘Annexation of New Guinea’, 26 November 1884, *QPD*, 44 (1884): 1192.

<sup>215</sup> In the Legislative Assembly Griffith was asked whether he had been made aware that the corvette *Elizabeth* had left Sydney with the intention of annexing New Britain and New Ireland on behalf of Germany to which Griffith replied he had heard ‘vague rumours’ only but ‘I never believed them’. Morehead considered it odd that Griffith did not have any information for he had heard a credible version in a smoking room of a club in Sydney. Primrose cites a letter dated 9 August sent from a R.W. Deverill to whom it is unclear but it was filed within Queensland’s Colonial Secretary papers. Deverill in essence regaled the story of a Mr. Thorley who had travelled from Europe with Finsch and five other Germans and he had pick up from conversations with the party that their objective was to proceed to New Guinea and annex the northeastern portion. Dr George Brown, a Methodist missionary working in the Solomons and the northeastern coast of New Guinea, presented the same information, which he had gleaned through his interactions with Finsch and his party and had taken it to Commodore Erskine who dismissed the whole idea as impossible. Morehead, ‘Annexation by Germany’, 24 December 1884, *QPD*, 44 (1884): 2052; Primrose, ‘Other Factors in the Annexation of South-Eastern New Guinea,’ 78.

<sup>216</sup> Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 260; ‘German Annexation in the Pacific’, *Age*, 19 December 1884; ‘New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration’, *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 120.

<sup>217</sup> Romilly had been transferred off the *Raven* for it had sailed to Cooktown to telegraph the news of the German annexations. Hugh H. Romilly, *Letters from the Western Pacific and Mashonaland 1878-1891*. London: David Nutt, 1893: 205.

<sup>218</sup> Both McIlwraith and Service had placed considerable value on Derby’s July 1883 public announcement in the House of Lords that Britain would regard it as an ‘unfriendly act’ if any other country attempted to establish a settlement on the coast of New Guinea. The worsening situation in Egypt and Britain’s associated need for German support in effect neutralised the opinion outlined in Colonial Office’s original position. McIlwraith,

‘severest censure’ was Lord Derby whose action Service described ‘as one of the most melancholy and marvellous illustrations of political imbecility that has ever been recorded in history.’<sup>219</sup> Romilly reported from Cooktown in early January 1885 that the ‘Australians are too frantic for words about the German annexations. Lord Derby, in effigy, is suffering many indignities at their hands.’<sup>220</sup> An additional constituent feature of the Australian reaction to the ‘German invasion of New Guinea’ was the laudatory references to Mcllwraith’s foresight.<sup>221</sup> ‘Exactly what we expected’ was the *Queenslander’s* view and this characterised the colonial belief that Mcllwraith’s 1883 perception of German ambitions in New Guinea was valid and astute.<sup>222</sup> It was therefore argued that if Mcllwraith’s foresight had been heeded then New Guinea would not have ‘passed into the hands of a foreign, and at the present moment a decidedly unfriendly, Power’ nor would the ‘need for the present humiliating concession...have arisen.’<sup>223</sup>

The chronological development of Germany’s annexationist aspirations in New Guinea contradicts this supposition. It is apparent that decisive action by Germany did not precede Mcllwraith’s attempted annexation but was in fact a reaction to it. The cumulative effect of the intensity of the Australian colonies’ campaign for the annexation of New Guinea provoked alarm and protest from the existent German commercial interests in the area. In response to the numerous and spirited

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‘Annexation by Germany’, 24 November 1884, *QPD*, 44 (1884): 2052; Service to Sir H.B. Loch Governor of Victoria, 20 December 1884, ‘New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration’, *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 119-20.

<sup>219</sup> ‘Latest by Telegraph’, *Queenslander*, 27 December 1884; Quote cited in Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 271.

<sup>220</sup> Cooktown, 8 January 1885, Romilly, *Letters from the Western Pacific and Mashonland*: 207.

<sup>221</sup> This was the common term of reference that J.A. Froude the distinguished historian noted in his tour of Australia at the time the Annexation was announced, cited in Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 267.

<sup>222</sup> ‘Exactly What We Expected’, *Queenslander*, 27 December 1884.

petitions protesting these colonies' escalating action and their indifference or denial of Germany's legitimate interests in the Pacific, Bismarck adopted a more aggressive colonial policy. Diplomatic negotiations with Britain sought and obtained, through Munster's 9<sup>th</sup> August meeting with Granville, Britain's recognition of German interests in northeastern New Guinea.<sup>224</sup> Rejected was the Australian proclivity to consider the entire eastern portion of the island as 'a natural dependency of Australia'.<sup>225</sup> The secrecy of these diplomatic considerations and negotiations between Britain and Germany precluded an Australian awareness of the situation and thus facilitated the perception that Bismarck had robbed 'us of our inheritance' and that Britain had 'deliberately and coolly betrayed' the Australian colonies.<sup>226</sup> Within this highly emotive context Mcllwraith's initial annexation action on the 'mere rumour that Germany had designs upon New Guinea' was legitimatised and therefore lauded as a valid pre-emptive or defensive act.<sup>227</sup> Though factually flawed and stripped of its problematic aspects, this assessment ensured that Mcllwraith and his 'daring act of annexation' were officially accepted and preserved as a historically significant event in the colonial record.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*; Service to Victorian Governor, Lord Loftus, 20 December 1884, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*, 1 (1886): 119-20; 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24, 25 December 1884.

<sup>224</sup> Gordon, *The Australian Frontier in New Guinea*: 239-43; Jacobs, 'Bismarck and the Annexation of New Guinea': 19-20.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>226</sup> 'Exactly What We Expected', *Queenslander*, 27 December 1884; Watson, 'Concerning Colonial Federation,' 85-93; 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 23 December 1884.

<sup>227</sup> 'Exactly What We Expected', *Queenslander*, 27 December 1884; Deakin, 'The Federal Council of Australasia': 155.

<sup>228</sup> The recurrence and reinforcement of this celebratory view of Mcllwraith's action was particularly notable in the Queensland arena. Alfred Davis, in a paper presented to the Historical Society of Queensland declared that 'most Australians realise that it was only the blundering of the British authorities, such, for instance, as the refusal to endorse action of Sir Thomas Mcllwraith in ordering the hoisting of the Union Jack at Port Moresby in 1883, which was responsible for what followed.' Alfred G. Davis, 'The Pacific Islands - Their Glamour and Their Tragedies,' *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 3: 3 (1944): 143-74; Brigadier-General Maclver, 'Rivals for the Future Supremacy in the Pacific,' *Queensland Review*, 1: 2 (September 1885): 109-21.

To the Australian colonies, the New Guinea crisis exemplified the subordinate and ineffective position that they occupied within the bureaucracy of Imperial governance. Initially, the colonies' demonstrated their resentment of this state of affairs by proclaiming that irreparable damage had been caused to the Imperial/colonial relationship. This sentiment expanded to a determined stand that it was time that the colonies separated from the Mother Country and assumed complete responsibility over their own interests for, as the *Queenslander* argued in January 1885, 'Providence helps those who help themselves.'<sup>229</sup> Such a proposition belied the reality of the colonies' enforced dependency on Britain. On the abatement of colonial fury it was transmuted into an appeal for the necessity of the 'Colonies to put forth her federated strength.'<sup>230</sup>

Throughout 1884 the draft Federal Council Bill had languished in the Imperial arena, largely because of the extent of 'business' before the Imperial Parliament and more particularly because New South Wales had continued to delay its consideration of the Federal resolutions.<sup>231</sup> In November 1884, Lord Derby received an Address from the New South Wales Legislative Council requesting the Federal Council Bill be submitted to the Imperial Parliament.<sup>232</sup> The peculiarity of the New South Wales situation was that both the Legislative Assembly and the

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<sup>229</sup> McIlwraith had indicated during a debate on the Annexation Question in late October 1884 that the question of Australia being better off as a 'federated nation by themselves' rather than 'simply as an appanage of the British Empire' had been 'really considered' during the previous twelve months. Whilst the ensuing New Guinea crisis introduced a more frantic tone to the discussions none of the colonial leaders seriously contemplated a severance of bonds with Britain. A recurrent feature of New South Wales' opposition to the Federal Council was the belief that amongst Victoria's motives and the other colonies to a lesser degree was that the Council was 'a first step at separation from the Mother country'. *Queenslander*, 3 January 1885 cited in Primrose, 'Other Factors in the Annexation of South Eastern New Guinea': 90; Watson, 'Concerning Colonial Federation,' 86; McIlwraith, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 29 October 1884, *QPD*, 44 (1884): 1189.

<sup>230</sup> Sir Alfred Stephen, 'Federation: New Guinea', 23 July 1884, *NSWPD*, 14 (1883-84): 4486.

<sup>231</sup> Derby to the Governors of the Australian Colonies, 11 December 1884, 'Federal Council of Australasia: Constitution and First Meeting: Despatches, Correspondence, and Other Papers', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 40-42.

<sup>232</sup> Derby to New South Wales Governor Lord Loftus, 3 January 1885, *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 46.

Legislative Council had considered the question on the same day, 30<sup>th</sup> October 1884. The result was that the Lower House had voted against the Federal resolutions but the Upper House had passed them and thus forwarded the Address.<sup>233</sup> The receipt then of this Address from New South Wales did not indicate a significant shift in the colony's stance on the Federal Council proposal; rather, considerable opposition remained.

New South Wales' opposition to the Federal proposal was two-pronged. The more potent of the two arguments against the Federal Council was based on suspicion of the motives of Victoria: from this 'lurking notion' came the contention that New South Wales was being 'hood-winked' into adopting a Bill that contained powers which would effect an 'invasion of the independence of local legislatures' and 'override our liberties'.<sup>234</sup> 'Let us not be a party to our own degradation' was the principle premise of this argument.<sup>235</sup> The second and less emotively charged argument assailed the proposition of the Federal Council from the opposite direction, and asserted that it was too premature and too limited and would not serve to advance the cause of 'real federation'.<sup>236</sup> The chief protagonist of this line of argument was Sir Henry Parkes and his reasoning was that:

In every federal body which is to act for independent legislatures, there must be sufficient largeness and sufficient power to preserve its

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<sup>233</sup> 'Federation of the Colonies', 30 October 1884, *NSWPD*, 15 (1883/84): 6149-6231.

<sup>234</sup> W.R. Piddington and William Dalley 'Federation: New Guinea', 9 July 1884, *NSWPD*, 14 (1883/84): 4254-56; John Robertson, 'Federation of the Colonies', 30 October 1884, *NSWPD*, 15 (1884): 6184.

<sup>235</sup> Ironically, it was as a direct result of Victoria's premier event the Melbourne Cup that the Federal resolutions and draft Federal Council Bill failed to pass the New South Wales legislature in 1884. Several members had 'escaped to the Melbourne races' and as a result it was 'scarcely possible for a quorum to be kept together' during the 30<sup>th</sup> October debate. On several occasions throughout the debate the House was counted and the 'state of the house' was advanced as an indicator of 'how much interest is taken in this question by the Parliament of New South Wales.' The Sydney *Bulletin* later remarked that 'it would appear...that New South Wales owes the preservation of her autonomy to a horse-race in a neighbouring colony.' Robertson remained suspicious of Victoria's intentions and was an influential opponent to New South Wales joining the Federal Council. Mr Buchanan and Sir John Robertson, 'Federation of the Colonies', 30 October 1884, *Ibid*: 6188; Sydney *Bulletin*, cited in P.F. Gilbert and J.E. Tate, (eds.), *Federation and the Early Commonwealth*. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1974: 10.

<sup>236</sup> Sir Henry Parkes, 'Federation of the Colonies', 30 October 1884, *NSWPD*, 15 (1884): 6198.

authority....the convention met to consider this most difficult and greatest of subjects [federation] at a time when opinion was not matured, when it was still perplexed by conflicting interests....[T]here are incurable causes of immediate failure in...such a rickety institution....[I]s it not better to let the idea of federation mature, to grow in men's minds, until the time comes, if we are to federate, that we can have a solid, enduring structure of federation?...Now, I venture to ask the Committee...to pause, and not create an impediment in the way of federation. I ask them not to diminish the chance of successful federation at some near future time.<sup>237</sup>

Adherents to this line of reasoning existed within the parliaments of the other colonies, most notably Victoria and Queensland and from this form of protestation against the Federal Council there developed a concerted advocacy for a 'sure and solid federation of the colonies'.<sup>238</sup>

Efforts by the Imperial Government to amend the draft Federal Council Bill to placate New South Wales failed and the bill continued to be 'distasteful' to the colony in July 1885. Stuart as a result requested that the Imperial Government postpone its consideration of the Bill for another session to enable New South Wales to submit further amendments that would present a better 'chance of this Colony coming in'.<sup>239</sup> Service argued that it was 'no fault' of the consenting colonies that the 'new views of Sydney' had not been sent in time for discussion and successfully appealed to the Imperial authorities to 'let nothing now stop the way'.<sup>240</sup> On the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1885 the Imperial Parliament passed the *Federal Council of Australasia Act* and between September and December Western Australia, Fiji, Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria consecutively passed the

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<sup>237</sup> *Ibid*: 6166-6199.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*: 6198.

<sup>239</sup> Stuart to New South Wales Agent General Saul Samuel, 14 July 1885, *Further Papers Relating to the Bill for the Constitution of a Federal Council for Australasia. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, June 1886: 6

<sup>240</sup> Service to Victorian Agent General Robert Murray Smith, 20 July 1885, *Ibid*: 1.



*Federal Council (Adopting) Act.*<sup>241</sup> It was, one contemporary asserted 'sad to see...New South Wales humbugging, and by their own false political wisdom left out in the cold – separated from the happy Australian family!'<sup>242</sup>

The elation provoked by the Imperial Government's decision and by the promptitude with which the consenting colonial parliaments proceeded to pass the Adopting Bill was swiftly overtaken by the disturbing signs and ultimate 'defection' of South Australia at the final stage.<sup>243</sup> The prospect of less than half of the Australian population being represented at the Council and the inconvenience of none of the assenting colonies sharing a border, Griffith argued, would create 'a federal council that would really be very lame and incomplete.'<sup>244</sup> In the Queensland arena McIlwraith advocated perseverance, for a limited collective 'would not be a *fiasco*...it would...be a good step in the right direction towards federation'. In Victoria, Service was also encouraged not to abandon the whole enterprise.<sup>245</sup> The assemblage at Hobart for the inaugural meeting of the Federal Council of Australasia on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 1886 was nonetheless 'shorn of the grandeur which we had hoped would attach to it'.<sup>246</sup> Optimism and caution however permeated through the speeches. Service declared in his Presidential

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<sup>241</sup> Secretary of State for the Colonies Hon. F.H. Stanley to the Governors of the Australian Colonies, 14 August 1884, Federal Council of Australasia: Constitution and First Meeting: Despatches, Correspondence, and Other Papers', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 63-64; Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 114-15.

<sup>242</sup> J.M. Grant, 'Australian Federation,' *Queensland Review*, 1: 2 (September 1885): 172-77.

<sup>243</sup> 'Indifference' was the reason advanced by the *Brisbane Courier* for South Australia's failure to pass the Adopting Bill more specifically South Australia objected to the smallness of the body in particular that the limited number of members made the Council only indirectly representative. 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 27 January 1886; John Cockburn, 'Address in Reply', 11 June 1884, South Australian House of Assembly, Cockburn, *Australian Federation*: 48.

<sup>244</sup> Griffith, 'Federal Council (Adopting) Bill (Queensland) – Consideration in Committee of Legislative Council's Amendments', 3 November 1885, *QPD*, 47 (1885): 1395-1397.

<sup>245</sup> McIlwraith, *Ibid*: 1397; Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*: 204.

<sup>246</sup> 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 27 January 1886.

Speech that the Council would 'no doubt be regarded by the nations of the world as the embryo of a great Consolidated Dominion'.<sup>247</sup> Griffith 'descanted' that:

this first session of the Federal Council initiates a very important era in the history of this part of Her Majesty's dominion; and it is of the greatest consequence that what we do should be done wisely and considerably...that we should encourage...the other colonies which at present hold aloof, to believe that the powers conferred by the Enabling Act on the Federal Council were wisely conferred, and that the Federal Council can be trusted to exercise them with discretion.<sup>248</sup>

The anticipation was that the 'force of circumstances' would 'compel' New South Wales to enter the Federal Council. This did not transpire and without the participation of New South Wales and South Australia, except for one session, the limited nature of the Council's representation and its output afforded 'plenty of matter for the scoffer'.<sup>249</sup>

From a statistical point of view the productivity of the Federal Council was not overwhelming. In its fourteen-year existence the Council sat for only 42 days and produced only ten pieces of legislation.<sup>250</sup> An additional detail, that elicits doubt over the extent of influence that the Federal Council exercised in the Imperial domain, was that of the eleven addresses made to the Queen only four received replies.<sup>251</sup> 'Ill-starred as the career of the Council may appear' it did exercise a discernable influence directly and indirectly upon the federal cause.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Service, 'President's Speech', 26 January 1886, *Federal Council of Australasia. Session 1886*: 8.

<sup>248</sup> T.W.H. Leavitt, 'Resume of the First Federal Council,' T.W.H. Leavitt, (ed.), *Jubilee History of Victoria and Melbourne. Volume 2*. Melbourne: Wells and Leavitt Publishers, 1888: no page numbers Griffith, 'The Governor's Speech. Address in Reply', 26 January 1886, *Federal Council of Australasia. Session 1886. Official Record of Debates*: 12.

<sup>249</sup> Grant, 'Australian Federation,' 173; Deakin, 'The Federal Council of Australasia': 155.

<sup>250</sup> Victor Isaacs, 'Hope Deferred: The Federal Council of Australasia,' *New Federalist*, 7 (June 2000): 81-86; Francis John Mines, *Premiers' Conferences and Other Intercolonial Conferences in Australasia Before Federation*. Canberra: Arrow Press, 1976: 64

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid*: 65.

<sup>252</sup> Deakin, 'The Federal Council of Australasia': 157.

A repeatedly stated objective of the Federal Council was that it 'would form a tie which did not now exist'.<sup>253</sup> Despite the irregularity of the Council's meetings and the disparaging synopsis of the Federal Council as only being 'fruitful...of picnics for Premiers', the interaction between the leading statesmen of the participating colonies was a functional and necessary contribution to the establishment and maintenance of intercolonial ties.<sup>254</sup> Griffith's biographer Roger Joyce argued that the main significance of the Federal Council for Griffith was that it kept him in close contact with the leaders of the other colonies.<sup>255</sup> As a forum for advancing 'matters of federal concern' the Council served as a formative ground for federal action and from its ranks Griffith and Tasmania's Andrew Inglis Clark emerged as two notable federalists.<sup>256</sup> Griffith and Clark reproduced in detail a number of the legislative powers conferred on the Federal Council in their capacity as the principal authors of the draft 1891 Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Bill.<sup>257</sup>

The Federal Council, moreover, extended two distinctive though indirect contributions to the federal movement. First it confirmed the utility of the defence argument in generating colonial cooperation. The *Brisbane Courier* succinctly stated the 'impulse given by the movement of foreigners in the Pacific carried the federal tide onward with such a rush that it seemed as if about to attain its object and complete the union of the colonies.'<sup>258</sup> Second, it can feasibly be argued that 'the foundation stone of the Australian Dominion' had been laid with the Federal

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<sup>253</sup> John Cockburn, 'Address in Reply', 11 June 1884, South Australian House of Assembly, Cockburn, *Australian Federation*: 48.

<sup>254</sup> Richard Baker, *Federation*. Adelaide: Scrymgeour & Sons, 1897: 12

<sup>255</sup> Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 124.

<sup>256</sup> 'Federal Union: Adjourned Debate,' 2 February 1893, *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 5 (1893): 24.

<sup>257</sup> R. Else-Mitchell, 'The Establishment in 1885 of the Federal Council of Australasia,' *Australian Law Journal*, 59 (November 1985): 666-69.

<sup>258</sup> 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 27 January 1886.

Council.<sup>259</sup> An associated feature of the sustained criticism of the Federal Council's 'consumptive existence' was the advocacy for, and the subsequent development of, a 'grander movement' for the complete federation of the Australian Colonies.<sup>260</sup> South Australia's entrance into the Federal Council for the February 1889 session, Deakin contended, was one instance of the Federal Council serving to "spur the sides of the intent' of those outside its ranks'.<sup>261</sup> In South Australia's combination with the Council, New South Wales found itself isolated from the federal compact, which stimulated Parkes in particular 'into fresh activity'.<sup>262</sup> Under Parkes' new federal directive the Federal Council was practically and historically relegated from the federal cause. To his mind, 'the first movement worthy of the noble object of bringing all Australia under one National Government arose from my invitation in October 1889.'<sup>263</sup>

At the commencement of 1883 the idea of Australian federation was, to the *Queensland Punch*, a topic worthy of parody:

The Australian is nothing if not paradoxical, if we leave the parent colony out of it for a little bit. Ever since we cut the painter from New South Wales we have done nothing but celebrate Separation Days and spout nonsense about the roaring benefits that must prove necessarily attendant upon Federation. *Botheration*, is, to the intelligent outsider, the not very unnatural result.<sup>264</sup>

Federation was quite clearly considered contrary to the preferred and entrenched pattern of colonial isolationism. If the federal cause was to advance from rhetoric to a practical consideration, it needed to countermand the zeal with which each of the Australian colonies revered and preserved their independence. Colonial

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<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>260</sup> Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*: 583.

<sup>261</sup> Deakin, 'The Federal Council of Australasia': 157.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*: 585.

<sup>264</sup> *Queensland Punch*, 1 January 1883.

events, such as the railway union between New South Wales and Victoria in June 1883 afforded the opportunity to symbolically represent and promote the federal objective. The rhetoric of these 'festive' events did however indicate that there existed a developing colonial interest in political federation. Yet the sentiment behind these 'plausible platitudes' on the federal idea was routinely abandoned under the pressure of local issues and the resurgence of intercolonial rivalry and jealousy.<sup>265</sup> What was required to transcend these durable features of the Australian colonial experience, the colonies' acknowledged, was 'a favourable opportunity...for a decided effort in the cause of federation.'<sup>266</sup>

This opportunity materialised the Imperial Government's July 1883 repudiation of Queensland's attempted annexation of New Guinea, in April to avert German occupation. Affronted by the Imperial Government's, action Queensland's Premier Sir Thomas McIlwraith sought redress and colonial support. Federative action was necessary, the Secretary of State for the Colonies Lord Derby argued 'if the Australian colonies desired an extension of their territory'.<sup>267</sup> McIlwraith took immediate steps to initiate this course of action and called for a Convention to consider the basis upon which a Federal Government could be constituted. Despite the varied responses from the colonies the Convention was convened in late November 1883, with the notable absence of McIlwraith who had been defeated on the prominent local political issue of the transcontinental railway scheme. Despite the durability of intercolonial tensions, the Convention achieved its principal objective in the establishment of some sort of permanent federal

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<sup>265</sup> 'Forbes on Federation', *Week*, 21 July 1883.

<sup>266</sup> 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 July 1883.

<sup>267</sup> Despatch No. 37 'Declining to annex New Guinea,' 11 July 1883, Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea and the Administration of the Protectorate, PRV7192/1/1QSA.

organisation. Reflecting the unique character of this Convention was the declaration of the New Zealand Premier and delegate. Major H. A. Atkinson believed that whatever the result, the actual assemblage of all the Australasian colonies to consider the federal topic was significant enough for him to state 'that the first beat of Australian life has been given'.<sup>268</sup> Thus the December 1883 colonial agreement to establish the Federal Council of Australasia, a legislative body sanctioned to 'deal with a few simple issues only', could be heralded as 'the first stepping stone to a grand union of the various Colonies of Australia'.<sup>269</sup> To combat colonial fears of any potential encroachment on the authority of their independent legislatures the federal beginning was deliberately modest, and the Federal Council was therefore a practical concession to the overarching individualism of the Australian colonies. Consequently, the subjects that the Federal Council could deal with were 'few in number, and by no means important'.<sup>270</sup> Although an 'impotent body', the historical significance of the Federal Council lay in the fact that the 1883 colonial compact to establish this modified federal body constituted the first concrete and practical advancement on the federal question after more than thirty years of rhetoric.<sup>271</sup> To the Melbourne correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the significance of the 1883 achievement was such that he declared that 'when the history of this epoch comes to be written, this first beginning of comprehensive Australian nationality will occupy several chapters'.<sup>272</sup> Prevailing circumstances and subsequent events initiated the erosion of this expectation of historical significance. The most

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<sup>268</sup> Major H.A. Atkinson, 'Picnic to the Delegates', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1883.

<sup>269</sup> 'Editorial', *Argus*, 5 December 1883; Grant Webster discussion on Royal Colonial Institutes paper by Wilfred Powell, 'New Guinea and the Western Pacific,' *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, 15 (1883/1884): 7-38.

<sup>270</sup> 'Editorial', *Argus*, 8 December 1883.

<sup>271</sup> 'The Australasian Convention', *Argus*, 8 December 1883.

<sup>272</sup> 'Our Melbourne Letter', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December 1883.

insidious was the resurgence of the intercolonial hostilities between New South Wales and Victoria, which undermined the symbolism of the Federal Council achievement. A further testament to the strength of intercolonial frictions was the colonial inability to harness, through collaboration, the discontent invoked by Germany's December 1884 annexation of northeastern New Guinea. The *Argus* expressed with regret in January 1885 that:

Australia was not of one mind, was not zealous in the matter, and allowed local jealousies to interfere. We are still without federation, and, unless some minds in Australia change, may long remain without it.<sup>273</sup>

The Federal Council of Australasia occupies a contradictory position. Its establishment did constitute as the *Times* asserted 'an epoch in Australasian history' but 'its birth' was 'almost unnoticed' by the general public.<sup>274</sup> In acknowledgement of the existent conditions of the Australian colonial situation the *Times* concluded that 'Australasian Federation has been born perhaps rather prematurely.'<sup>275</sup> Divergent interests and the colonial disinclination to alter the paramount status of their local legislatures continued to impede the federal cause. Local or internal issues remained the priority of each colonial government.

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<sup>273</sup> 'German Annexation and the Colonial Office', *Argus*, 7 January 1885.

<sup>274</sup> 'Editorial', *Times*, 9 December 1885.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*





## Chapter 5

### Griffith's Liberal Reforms 1883-1888: 'An entire revolution in the Government'.<sup>1</sup>

In January 1886, when the Federal Council was set to convene for its inaugural meeting in Hobart, it was publicly acknowledged in Queensland that the federal idea had 'so little hold on the mass of the people'.<sup>2</sup> More particularly the motivating forces behind the establishment of the Federal Council and its procedural functions were 'neither understood nor appreciated'.<sup>3</sup> The cause of this state of affairs was not so much opposition to the federal ideal but the subtle and more potent force of indifference.<sup>4</sup> Interest in the federal topic had, temporarily, been peaked in Queensland by the proceedings of the 1883 Federation Convention in Sydney. Appealing for Queenslanders had been the 'credit' conferred on the colony by the 'honourable record' of its new premier Samuel Griffith.<sup>5</sup> This colonial pride however quickly receded under the pressure of local issues roused by Griffith's 'new track of progressive reform'.<sup>6</sup> This peak and decline of interest typified two interconnected factors of the federal cause. First, that the advocates of federation were a limited collective of politicians who, under the influence of 'enthusiastic' gatherings, were prone to indulge in the 'usual gush and twaddle' on the federal topic but were unable to convey or foster this sentiment in their own local arenas.<sup>7</sup> Thus, as was evident in the Queensland context, the federal topic

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<sup>1</sup> 'A Northern Resident', 'Separation', Letter to the Editor, *Queenslander*, 15 November 1884.

<sup>2</sup> 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 27 January 1886.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> This temporary peak in interest was largely confined to the capital. The *Northern Miner* commented on 'The people of Australia do not trouble themselves much about politics....Hence we see how little the great mass of the people care about the doings of the convention in Sydney.' 'Another Anniversary', *Week*, 15 December 1883; 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 17 December 1883.

<sup>6</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 27 November 1883.

<sup>7</sup> 'Editorial', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1883; 'Topics of the Day', *Northern Miner*, 1 June 1885.

had for the most part featured as a tangential consideration consistently marginalised by the more immediate and pressing matters of local concern. This dynamic was not confined solely to Queensland. George Dibbs<sup>8</sup> contended that the reasoning for the contrast between New South Wales and Victoria's federal enthusiasm was the difference in intensity of the demands of each colony's domestic affairs:

in Victoria they have not had so much concern with legislation on local affairs, they have had no exciting discussions on the land question, no large loans to float, no civil service bill to carry, nor a very large railway policy to develop...It is notorious that in Victoria there have been no home matters or politics of great moment to engage attention, that the Government...for want of exciting matters at home they go abroad for them.<sup>9</sup>

Queensland's local circumstances, in contrast to Victoria, had and continued to be 'pregnant with momentous events'.<sup>10</sup> In line with this, reservations were voiced when it was believed that peripheral external matters were encroaching on local considerations. 'The public hope,' the editor of the *Queensland Review* George Craig appraised in mid-1886, was 'that the Premier will not shelter himself too much behind the praiseworthy obligation of intercolonial and foreign duty'.<sup>11</sup> While the Queensland press had 'rendered noble service in...educating public opinion' upon the federal subject, the weight of their reportage consistently reflected the primacy of local issues.<sup>12</sup> Foremost amongst these issues, during 1883-1888 period, were the reform of land legislation, economic and climatic factors, the coloured labour question, the resurgence of Northern separatism and working

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<sup>8</sup> George Dibbs (1834-1904), Member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly 1874-77 and 1882-95, New South Wales Premier in 1885, 1889 and between October 1891 and July 1894. T.W. Campbell, 'George Dibbs', Irving, (ed.), *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*: 356.

<sup>9</sup> Illustrative of Victoria's topical interest in federation was the North Melbourne Literary and Debating Society's September 1883 payment to Mr. Taverner to present a talk on Federation. In July 1884, another predominately working class Melbourne suburb, Footscray, held a debate between the local Mechanics' Institute and the Footscray Debating Society on the question of the Federation of the Australian Colonies. George Dibbs cited in 'Federation of the Australian Colonies,' 30 October 1884, *NSWPD*, 15(1883/84): 6171; Roberts, 'The Politics of Federation,' 7-20.

<sup>10</sup> 'Summary for Europe – Political', *Queenslander*, 14 July 1883.

<sup>11</sup> Craig, 'The Griffith Policy': 198.

class activism. That these dynamic issues had been a perennial feature of Queensland's developmental record positions them as legitimate markers of Queensland's social, economic and political context. The purpose of this chapter is to depict the matrix of local issues and associative elements that surfaced and preoccupied Queensland in the late 1880s and 1890s. Particularly pertinent to Queensland's involvement in the federal movement was a tripartite intersection between the coloured labour question, the consolidation of white labour and the politicisation of Northern separatism. The composite effect of the political and social convergence of these matters was twofold. First, it formalised a distinctive and enduring set of Queensland issues that focused public and political attention locally and as a result influenced the Queensland response to the federal topic. Second, it fostered the formal elevation of racial homogeneity as a practical and motivational argument for federation. What in effect transpired was a simultaneous but adverse development, the intensification of both Queensland provincialism and the broader idea of colonial federation.

Land policy reform, rail construction and the labour problem were, Griffith declared in the 1883 election campaign, the 'questions of the gravest importance, upon which the future history of the colony, will in a great measure depend.'<sup>13</sup> His success at this election and his resultant position as the 'head of a new Government' was to the pro-Liberal newspaper the *Week* just reward for Griffith's 'years of steadfast, painstaking opposition' and his 'fidelity to the country's interest'.<sup>14</sup> Griffith's intransigent determination and the obvious popularity of his policy platform essentially comprise the only semblance of similarity between his

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<sup>12</sup> Watson, 'Concerning Colonial Federation,' 85-93.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Griffith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Queenslander*, 4 August 1883.

political style and that of his rival McIlwraith.

Griffith presents as a more enigmatic figure than McIlwraith, though his supporters were as equally loyal and praiseworthy. Yet, a notable feature of this praise was the lack of personable references. Griffith's most outstanding quality it would seem was his work ethic. A contemporary of Griffith's, T.S. Oswald noted that 'He is as ornament of ability and hard work in any Ministry, and as such commands and deserves the respects of all writers and statesmen'.<sup>15</sup> George Craig, though he opposed Griffith's Government argued that:

the worst enemy of Mr. Griffith cannot but admit his great energy, industry, hardihood, versatility, patience, administrative tact, love of ramble, general information and intelligence. He is capable of doing the work of six Ministers, of ruling the whole of Australia, of directing the military forces and commanding the Australian fleet, of gaining the ear of radical democracy; and it is no idle prophecy to state that he will soon be Sir Samuel Walker Griffith.<sup>16</sup>

A corollary of Griffith's 'indomitable industry and perseverance' was that even his supporters described his demeanour as being 'cold and unsympathetic'.<sup>17</sup> The *Northern Miner* maintained in November 1883 that Griffith had 'improved in geniality and *bonhomie*' particularly since his 'trip to the North'.<sup>18</sup> This trip the paper argued had 'knocked the forensic starch out of him and developed several latent good points'.<sup>19</sup> Alfred Deakin's estimation of Griffith at the 1883 Federation Convention in Sydney counterbalances the *Northern Miner's* depiction. Deakin portrayed Griffith as being 'lean, ascetic, cold, clear, collected and

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<sup>14</sup> 'Another Anniversary', *Week*, 15 December 1883.

<sup>15</sup> Oswald, 'Government, and Queensland Politics,' 1-8.

<sup>16</sup> Griffith was created K.C.M.G in 1886 and G.C.M.G. in 1895. Craig, 'The Griffith Policy': 198; 'Death of Sir Samuel Griffith', *Queenslander*, 14 August 1920.

<sup>17</sup> Satge, *Pages From the Journal of a Queensland Squatter*. 247; W. Kinnaird Rose, 'The Hon. Samuel Walker Griffith, Q.C., Premier and Colonial Secretary of Queensland,' *Once A Month*, 3: 2 (August 1885): 83-86; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*. 73.

<sup>18</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 10 November 1883.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

acidulated....[with a] sceptical and almost cynical manner.'<sup>20</sup> Yet, contrary to this aspect of his personality Griffith's supporters openly revered him. W. Kinnaird Rose's memoir sketch of Griffith for the 'Gallery of Eminent Australasians' in *Once a Month* portrays this:

A lawyer and statesman, he has already left his impress for good on the statute book of one of our largest colonies; he has inaugurated great political and social reforms....Speaking generally, he has like Mr. Gladstone, a high ideal of public duty, and cannot conceive the possibility of a divorce of ethics from politics....there is something to admire in the bold and heroic measures which he has taken to....As a Parliamentary tactician he has no equal in the Queensland legislature....His skill won for him the admiration, not alone of his followers, but of the Opposition; and we know of nothing finer in political warfare than Mr. Hume Black's ungrudging testimony...to the consummate ability of the man....'We are all proud of him; Queensland is proud of him; Australia ought to be proud of him,' said Mr. Black....Mr. Griffith is a strong and commanding personality, destined to attain to yet greater triumphs, and to sway in no inconsiderable degree the future of Australia.<sup>21</sup>

Such high esteem was too excessive for an anonymous writer who declared in response to Rose's article that 'I object to set up a god in Brisbane.'<sup>22</sup> Religious symbolism was a notable and recurrent feature of the tributes paid to Griffith. 'One of the People' in May 1888, after Griffith's electoral defeat declared that:

The hearts of thousands are with him, that the present disappointment rests heavily on them....They still look to him as the Saviour of the land for the people...[and] his followers still enthusiastically and trustfully believe in him and his grand ideas for Queensland....For myself I would rather be Sir Samuel, (a patriotic, unselfish, noble and gifted statesman for good) though fifty times defeated, than Sir Thomas Mcllwraith though as many times elected.<sup>23</sup>

The characterisation of Mcllwraith as the ethical and political antithesis of Griffith, though strictly inaccurate, was an effective political device that gained currency in the social and political conflict that arose in the early 1880s. This 'political warfare'

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<sup>20</sup> Deakin, 'And Be One People': *Alfred Deakin's Federal Story*. 12.

<sup>21</sup> Rose, 'The Hon. Samuel Walker Griffith': 83-86.

<sup>22</sup> Anon., 'The Lounger at the Clubs,' *Queensland Review*, 1: 2 (September 1885): 167-71.

<sup>23</sup> Though Griffith had a religious background, as his Father was a Congregational preacher; the use of religious symbolism in reference to Griffith was more reflective of the reverence with which he was held. One

was in response to McIlwraith's Transcontinental Railway scheme and 'Coolie' labour proposal.<sup>24</sup> Broadly stated, Queensland had reached a junction in its development in which the resilient model of economically expedient policies, to generate and maintain rapid progress, was increasingly under challenge by the Liberal/white labour alliance, primarily on the basis that such policies lacked social accountability. McIlwraith's policies exemplified the Queensland maxim that progress and economic prosperity were synonymous and within this dynamic the creation of wealth through greater development was the principal objective.<sup>25</sup> Broader social considerations of the equitable distribution of wealth and racial exclusiveness were not specific concerns. Alternatively, McIlwraith's opponents emphasised the prospective social impact of his policies. Griffith therefore argued that McIlwraith's development policy was:

to make big contracts, to create vast estates, to encourage the creation of great monopolies, to gamble with the resources of the colony, to introduce into the colony two classes of people only – great capitalists and poor labourers – and generally act as the high priest of the great god Mammon.<sup>26</sup>

The proposed introduction of Indian 'Coolie' labour was advanced as the definitive example of McIlwraith's disregard for the colony's social welfare. The 'statesmanlike point of view' Griffith argued:

was to look a little forward and see what the consequences of adopting a given policy will be. We were told that if we introduce coolies from India we should develop the sugar interest and create enormous wealth....The question we had to ask ourselves was, What is to be the destiny of this country? How do you intend it to be inhabited? By white men or black?<sup>27</sup>

The racial arguments advanced by Griffith, though criticised as being 'nothing but claptrap' to gain the popular vote, were an emotive and decisive factor in the 1883

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of the People to Lady Griffith, 12 May 1888, 'Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1887-1891. MSQ 187', Mitchell Library, Sydney.

<sup>24</sup> Rose, 'The Hon. Samuel Walker Griffith': 85.

<sup>25</sup> Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith: His Public Career and Political Thought. A Short Essay': 123-28.

<sup>26</sup> 'Mr. Griffith at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

election campaign.<sup>28</sup> The urban electorates and the burgeoning pressure group of white labour were particularly receptive to Griffith's Liberal platform of social progress. Griffith advocated progressive reform to furnish 'the greatest good for the greatest number' and to safeguard 'Queensland as the inheritance of Europe, and not of Asia.'<sup>29</sup> The 1883 election was consequently canvassed as a contest between the malevolence of McIlwraith's economic policy and the benevolence of Griffith's social policy.

The electoral success of Griffith thus represented a significant shift away from economic prosperity being the principal gauge of Queensland's progress. Griffith's new Liberal Government commanded a two-thirds majority in the Legislative Assembly, 'a majority never before possessed by any Premier in this colony.'<sup>30</sup> The convincing nature of Griffith's triumph was optimistically portrayed as a sign that the 'storms of the year have passed away, and...dawned...[was] a condition of political peace and commercial prosperity.'<sup>31</sup> Contrary to this expectation the central pieces of Griffith's progressive reforms, encapsulated and enacted in the 1884 *Crown Lands Act*, and the 1885 *Act to Further Amend the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880, and To Put a Limit to its Operation* deepened old divisions and engendered new ones.

'By far the most important political question of the day' it was declared at the end of 1883 was the 'Land Question'.<sup>32</sup> Queensland's principal asset was and continued to be the land within its borders and thus land policy and economic

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<sup>28</sup> 'Editorial', 'Mr. Griffith at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

<sup>29</sup> *Telegraph*, 13 June 1884; 'Mr. Griffith at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

<sup>30</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 25 May 1885.

<sup>31</sup> 'Another Anniversary', *Week*, 15 December 1883.

<sup>32</sup> S.G. Mee, 'The Cardinal Question of the Day', *Northern Miner*, 19 November 1883.

policies contingent on land policy remained an integral feature of Queensland's politics. Embodied therefore in the kinds of initiatives introduced and the particular land management policies adopted were the political attitudes and ideological dispositions of each different government. Griffith had campaigned strongly against McIlwraith's vision of national progress and had condensed McIlwraith's policy of rapid development to one core principle that 'there was nothing in the world but money'.<sup>33</sup> Under this pretext McIlwraith's administration, it was argued, had forced the pace of Queensland's development too rapidly by providing the pastoral, sugar and mining industries with unlimited access to land. In contrast to McIlwraith's essentially economic view that the best form of land use was simply the most profitable, Griffith's new directive approached the land question from a socio-political perspective. Griffith pursued the Liberal ideal; in particular the broader social goal of a more equitable use of the colony's major natural resource to encourage the development of small agricultural farms to foster closer settlement. This objective essentially mirrored the 1860s land policy developments of the southern colonies, euphemistically referred to as 'unlocking the land' from a pastoral monopoly.<sup>34</sup> Charles Dutton, Minister for Lands in the new Liberal Cabinet was given the responsibility of drafting Queensland's comprehensive bill to enact these Liberal ideals.

Elected for the first time at the 1883 General Election, Dutton was aptly described as an 'absolute novice in Parliamentary life'.<sup>35</sup> Aside from his 'beginner' status, the

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<sup>33</sup> 'Mr. Griffith at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

<sup>34</sup> The Robertson Land Acts introduced in New South Wales by John Robertson in the early 1860s are referred to as the 'great land reforms' that lead to the dissolution of the old conservative pastoral political order. Bede Nairn, 'Sir John Robertson', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 6 (1851-1890): 38-48.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Boydell Dutton (1834-1904) pastoralist and politician was amongst the first applicants for pastoral leases on the Nive River when the Mitchell District was opened for settlement. In 1865 Dutton unsuccessfully stood for the new pastoral electorate of Mitchell. He did not stand again until 1883 and was successfully



more intriguing aspect to Dutton's appointment to the important land portfolio was that he was long-standing pastoralist and furthermore he represented the pastoral electorate of Leichhardt.<sup>36</sup> As a pastoralist and a Liberal, Dutton was, as Bernays succinctly stated, 'a most unusual product of the time'.<sup>37</sup> His selection in Griffith's Cabinet was initially 'regarded as a concession' to the squatters 'who had thrown off their allegiance to Sir Thomas Mcllwraith' in protest to the Transcontinental Railway proposal and joined Griffith's ranks in 1883.<sup>38</sup> There also existed reservations that Dutton's 'sympathies and views' were 'not in harmony' with Griffith's and it was therefore believed that his influence in Griffith's Ministry 'will not be great, because, though he is in it, he is not of it'.<sup>39</sup> The exact extent of the association between Dutton and Griffith is unclear but it is apparent they had developed some form of an association in the early 1880s.<sup>40</sup> Dutton's reputation was of 'an able man, a thinker, and a theorist' and Griffith believed him to be 'eminently qualified to deal with the Crown lands of the colony'.<sup>41</sup> Various speeches by Dutton and Griffith had provided a 'sketch' of the key features of the new land act and had provoked by March 1884 'great expectations' of the 'radical reform in our land system'.<sup>42</sup> Immense importance was placed on the forthcoming legislation, with the *Northern Miner* declaring that 'the land question remained the

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elected for elected for Leichhardt district. Dutton relinquished the Lands portfolio in August 1887 to become the Minister for Works and Mines. In Griffith's December 1887 reshuffle of his government he was appointed Minister for Railways. At the 1888 election Dutton lost his seat at the 1888 and made no attempt to re-enter politics. He later became a squatter in New South Wales. 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 1 December 1883; Beverly Kingston, 'Charles Boydell Dutton', *Australian Dictionary of Biography – Online Edition*: <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu/biogs/A03001b.htm>.

<sup>36</sup> Dutton had held a station in the Leichhardt district for 29 years. 'The New Ministry's Land Policy', *Queenslander*, 8 December 1883; 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 1 December 1883.

<sup>37</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 321.

<sup>38</sup> Extract from Rockhampton *Bulletin* cited in *Northern Miner*, 24 December 1883.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> William Henry Richmond, 'Government and Economic Development in Queensland 1883-1914: A Study of Policy Making.' Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 1987: 29.

<sup>41</sup> 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 1 December 1883; Griffith speech, 'Turning the First Sod of the Mackay Railway', *Queenslander*, 29 December 1883.

<sup>42</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 12 March 1884.

*piece de resistance* of the next session, the *crux* on which the fate of the present ministry depends.<sup>43</sup>

In a confidential memorandum to Griffith, Dutton outlined the main objectives of the 'Crown Lands Bill 1884':

To prevent the monopoly of land by a few, to ensure the gradual extension of occupancy by holders of moderate areas, to bring occupancy of moderate areas within the reach of men with small capital, and to secure to every member of the community a participation in some portion of the increasing value of land – to which as a worker he must have contributed – the basis of all previous land legislation, alienation is now abolished.<sup>44</sup>

The workings of the *Crown Lands Act* came into operation in April 1885.<sup>45</sup> The central feature of the Act was the Government resumption, on the surrender or expiration of a pastoral lease, of up to a half of the land previously held under the lease.<sup>46</sup> This 'resumed' part was then subdivided into blocks of 1,280 acres (512 hectares) for 'agricultural farms' and 20,000 acres (8,094 hectares) for 'grazing farms'.<sup>47</sup> The lease arrangements for these two agricultural pursuits were fifty years for agricultural farms with the provision made for freehold purchase after ten years and for grazing farms a basic thirty-year lease. Occupancy and improvements were a mandatory condition for both leases; in particular fencing of the area was required within five years for an agricultural farm lease and within three years for a grazing lease.<sup>48</sup> The main enterprise was to provide cheap land to encourage closer settlement through a more intensive, agricultural use of the land. Oscar de Satge presented the dynamics of the intended process:

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Confidential memorandum Dutton to Griffith, no date cited in Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 93.

<sup>45</sup> The alternative or unofficial name for the *Crown Lands Act* was the Dutton Land Act.

<sup>46</sup> De Satge, *Pages from the Journal of a Queensland Squatter*: 347; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 321.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 322; 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 27 December 1884.

<sup>48</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 322.

Grazing farms pave the way, at no very distant date, for smaller holdings growing endless crops of wheat and maize; for the breaking up of the big stations now taking place to introduce the smaller lessee.<sup>49</sup>

Acknowledging that pastoralism was and continued to be the most productive and profitable form of land use, the squatters were offered, in compensation, greater security of tenure over the 'retained' portion of their leases. The *Brisbane Courier* affirmed that 'the theory that the squatter should be merely a temporary tenant, to be turned out as soon as the agriculturalist appeared on his land, has been abandoned.'<sup>50</sup> Lease periods were set at fifteen years for pastoral leases in 'unsettled' districts and ten years in 'settled' districts. Amendments to the Act in 1886 extended, under certain conditions, the 'unsettled' lease to twenty-one years.<sup>51</sup>

A second and pivotal objective of the Land Act was to significantly increase the colony's income. The Act, it was claimed, was expected to stimulate an 'immediate and unprecedented' amount of land selection and this therefore would increase the number of rent payers.<sup>52</sup> Second, the Act had introduced a higher rent charge for pastoral leases. Thus it was speculated that the projected income returns from the new level of land occupation would be sufficient to 'relieve us from the necessity of raising public revenue by Customs duties or other forms of taxation.'<sup>53</sup> The estimated revenue to be generated from the Land Act, it was claimed, would be sufficient to offset the cost of the Government's new public works program. Or more particularly it would cover the interest on the colony's £10,000,000 loan. This

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<sup>49</sup> De Satge, *Pages from the Journal of a Queensland Squatter*: 351.

<sup>50</sup> 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 27 November 1884.

<sup>51</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 321, 323.

<sup>52</sup> Dickson, Colonial Treasurer believed that it was 'no unreasonable thing to imagine' that 600 grazing farms of 10,000 acres each would be taken up in the first year, yielding, at the statutory minimum rent of 1½d. per acre, £37, 500 per annum. Agricultural selection it was estimated would yield at 3d. per acre £8, 000 per annum. Under the new rent level pastoral leases would contribute an extra £100, 000 per annum. Dickson cited in 'Crown Lands Bill', 27 August 1884, *QPD*, 43 (1884): 450.

loan represented Queensland's largest to date and had been raised at the end of 1884 to fund, primarily, an 'immense' government directed and financed program of railway construction.<sup>54</sup> The financial policy of the Liberal Government was therefore inextricably bound up with its land policy.

Hinging on each government's approach to the land question was its economic and political survival. The projected overall increase in revenue derived from the Land Act did not materialise and as a result serious difficulties subsequently arose in the repayment of Griffith's railway development loans.<sup>55</sup> The colony's financial position was further exacerbated by the negative impact of a continuing drought in which the pastoral sector 'suffered most severely'.<sup>56</sup> The reduction in productivity and profitability of this industry was a major economic concern as pastoralism continued to be the basis upon which 'very largely depends the welfare of the colony'.<sup>57</sup> In this worsening economic environment the critics began to bewail Griffith's 'Radical, if not Communistic' land reform policy.<sup>58</sup> Albert Wright was particularly critical of the idea of closer settlement:

Could anything be more opportune than the present series of droughts in exposing the folly and fallacy of the prevailing craze for "close settlement"....it should be sufficiently plain to all who have lived during the last three years in the Leichhardt and Western districts that cultivation will

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<sup>53</sup> The New Ministry's Land Policy', *Queenslander*, 8 December 1883.

<sup>54</sup> This £10,000,000 loan had been raised with difficulty in Britain, as investors were suspicious of the government's intentions. Griffith argued that the 'political enemies' of his Government had attempted 'to ruin our credit.' £6,917,000 was allocated to railway construction, £750,000 for immigration, £583,000 for harbour and river improvements, £485,000 for public buildings, £100,000 for bridges, £250,000 for electric telegraphs, £500,000 for local bodies, £250,000 for water supply, £100,000 for the defence of the colony and £35,000 to cover deficits on previous loans. Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 454; G.P. Taylor, 'Land Policy and the Development of Settlement in Queensland, 1868-1894', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 1966: 265-66; 'Greasing the Fifth Wheel', *Queensland Figaro*, 3 January 1885.

<sup>55</sup> Estimated income from rents under the Land Act was £30,000 the actual amount yielded was £3,708. The overall Land revenue had been calculated at £653,000 the actual amount received was £600,984. Interest on public debt accounted for £811,565 of Queensland's total £3,037,030 expenditure in 1885/86. £871,565 was estimated sum for public debt for 1886/87 financial year. Alcazar Press, *Queensland 1900: A Narrative of Her Past Together With Biographies of Her Leading Men*. 154.

<sup>56</sup> 'The Old Year and the New', *Queenslander*, 26 December 1885.

<sup>57</sup> Drought conditions had begun in late 1882 and continued throughout 1884, 1885 and most of 1886. *Ibid*; Taylor, 'Land Policy and the Development of Settlement in Queensland': 273.

<sup>58</sup> Oswald, 'Government, and Queensland Politics': 7.

entail ruin on all who are dependent on it, and grazing on the scale provided for by the Land Bill, except perhaps in particularly favoured spots, and where land is suitable for sheep, will be found to be the greatest delusion ever indulged in by the "great Liberal party".<sup>59</sup>

The serious economic repercussions of Griffith's 'rash and lavish policy' were a significant contributor to the retraction of the boom conditions that had prevailed under McIlwraith's directorship. By late 1885 the colony was under the negative effect of an economic recession.<sup>60</sup> A deficit of £99,197 was recorded in August 1885; by 1886 this figure had doubled to £221,865 and in the following year amounted to £455,885.<sup>61</sup> Unemployment became widespread throughout the colony. As early as September 1885 it was reported that 'the scarcity of employment now in the North is simply deplorable.'<sup>62</sup> In December 1883 the *Queenslander* had commented that there existed 'no need for any such extreme measure' as 'relief works' for the unemployed.<sup>63</sup> By June 1886, the extent of the downturn in employment was reflected in the Government's establishment of a Relief Board in Brisbane to aid those in distress.<sup>64</sup> As economic conditions deteriorated Griffith's opponents began to emphasise the 'very marked difference between the financial policy' of his Government and that of McIlwraith's.<sup>65</sup> A difference it was argued that was bound 'very materially to affect the prosperity of the colony both in the present and in the future.'<sup>66</sup> What the people wanted, 'Financier' declared, was not 'Radicalism...but the sturdy progression of a

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<sup>59</sup> 'Letter to the Editor', *Queenslander*, 13 December 1884.

<sup>60</sup> 'Financier', 'Financial Result of Eighteen Months of Griffith Administration,' *Queensland Review*, 1: 2 (September 1885): 101-08.

<sup>61</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 454.

<sup>62</sup> A.A. Giraud, 'The Solution of the Sugar Question,' *Queensland Review*, 1: 2 (September 1885): 186-87.

<sup>63</sup> 'The Unemployed', *Queenslander*, 8 December 1883.

<sup>64</sup> Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 116.

<sup>65</sup> *Queensland Figaro* employed this suppositional form of criticism as early as April 1884: 'The black cloud of Stagnation and Misery which FIGARO predicted as looming in the distance...is fast approaching, and threatens to engulf Queensland like a terrible Maelstrom....A Progressive Government like that of Sir Thomas McIlwraith would soon provide the sponge.' 'Financier', 'Financial Result of Eighteen Months of Griffith Administration': 101; 'The Coming Cloud', *Queensland Figaro*, 12 April 1884.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

McIlwraith.<sup>67</sup> To direct public attention to the economic failure of Griffith's socio-political approach and highlight the necessity of returning to the proven economic policies of McIlwraith was the underlying motive of George Craig's mid-1886 article:

It is not my latest wish to stand aside much longer and allow demagogues to misdirect the destiny of Queensland in the future. It appears to me that social or ultra-radical democrats have become a power in the colony....Mr. Griffith is the idol of the hour seated upon the peacock throne....Instead of a bold, vigorous, and progressive policy, the Government, apart from the untold effects of drought, have plunged the colony into a state of industrial and commercial coma, and made it stink in the exchanges of Sydney, London, and Melbourne.<sup>68</sup>

In an attempt to redress the miscalculation on the financial effect of the *Crowns Land Act* and to counter the fall in productivity brought about by the 'severity of the drought' Griffith's administration was forced to break with its pledge that public revenue would not be raised through new 'Customs duties or other forms of taxation'.<sup>69</sup> In September 1885 an *ad valorem* charge of 5 per cent was introduced for beer, spirits and mining and agricultural machinery, products previously imported free of charge.<sup>70</sup> This new form of taxation presented McIlwraith with an opportunity to deride the Government:

Extravagance in the South had made it necessary to find more revenue, and a tax had been put on the handiest article imported...beer (which was chiefly drunk by the working classes)....the Government were in want of funds, and taxed whisky, beer, and machinery. This, he thought, showed not only want of imagination, but want of knowledge, and of an interest in the great industries of the colony which must be condemned by the electors of both North and South Queensland.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

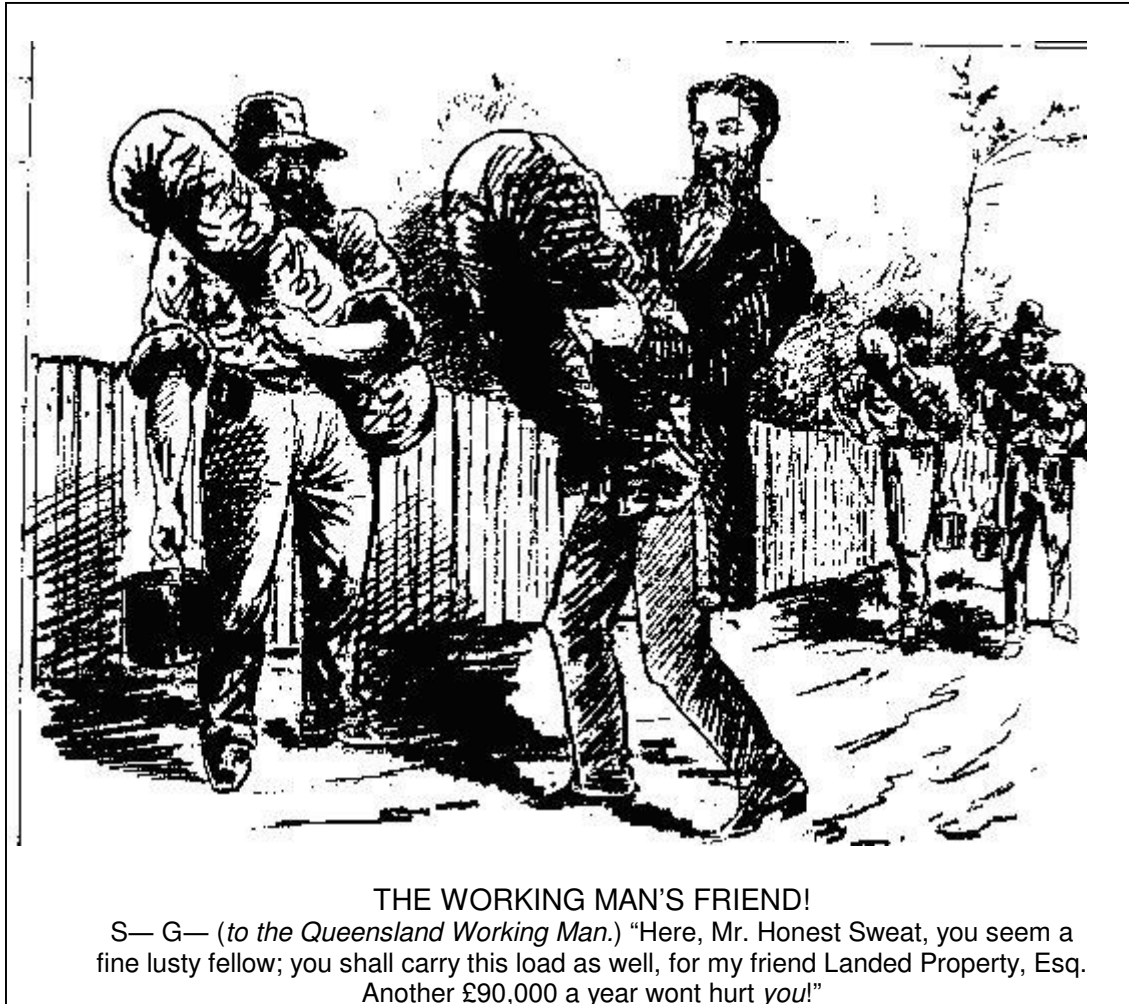
<sup>68</sup> Craig, 'The Griffith Policy': 199.

<sup>69</sup> 'Country News', *Queenslander*, 19 September 1885; 'The New Ministry's Land Policy', *Queenslander*, 8 December 1883.

<sup>70</sup> This contributed to a higher than expected return for Customs, £1,188,000 and in receipt was £1,229,329. Alcazar Press, *Queensland 1900*: 154; Wilson, 'The Development of Party Politics in Queensland: 1859-1900': 110.

<sup>71</sup> 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith in the North', *Queenslander*, 23 January 1886.

McIlwraith's specific reference to the working class was a tacit acknowledgment of this sectors significant support of Griffith's administration but at this point in time such criticism 'fell without effect.'<sup>72</sup>



**Figure 5.1: *Queensland Punch and Figaro*, 5 September 1885**

Griffith had retained, despite the current state of 'gloom...and adversity', his strong Ministerial majority and popular appeal.<sup>73</sup> This contrasted sharply with McIlwraith's position. The ailing leader of the Opposition was portrayed as 'the head of small minority in our present legislature' and his diminished authority was such that 'he could not get a man a billet as a gatekeeper on a Government Railway at

<sup>72</sup> 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 27 December 1884.

present.<sup>74</sup> Economic factors did progressively erode the public's confidence in Griffith but at the end of 1885 they were masked by the social and political focus on the 'deliverance of Queensland from the disgrace and ignominy of real slavery'.<sup>75</sup>

The question of coloured labour was one of the most controversial and enduring matters in Queensland politics. During the 1883 electoral campaign one of the 'great war cries' was 'Queensland for Europeans'.<sup>76</sup> Griffith had campaigned strongly on the anti-Coolie anti-coloured labour platform and asked the electorate to grant his party the opportunity 'to set ourselves resolutely to work to see that this should be a white country'.<sup>77</sup> Griffith was ostensibly adopting a 'decided stand' on the question of coloured labour.<sup>78</sup> Yet, an indeterminable feature of this stance was whether it was based on conviction or simply a political issue that offered 'a short cut to office'.<sup>79</sup> There did exist sufficient indicators to support the claim that he was a 'political juggler'.<sup>80</sup> J. Hamilton outlined in a debate on the Indian Immigration Bill in November 1882, that he had examined all of Griffith's speeches on the subject of coloured labour and 'on no occasion had the leader of the

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<sup>73</sup> 'The Old Year and the New', *Queenslander*, 26 December 1885.

<sup>74</sup> McIlwraith was forced due to his ill health to retire from politics in June 1886. He did not return until May 1888 when won the seat of North Brisbane from Griffith. 'Outward Bound', *Queensland Figaro*, 21 March 1885; D.B. Waterson, 'Thomas McIlwraith: A Colonial Entrepreneur,' Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce, and Margaret Cribb, (eds.), *The Premiers of Queensland*. St Lucia: University of Queensland, 1990: 119-41.

<sup>75</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 25 May 1885.

<sup>76</sup> 'The Coolie is Dead', *Northern Miner*, 14 January 1884.

<sup>77</sup> 'Mr. Griffith at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

<sup>78</sup> 'Rover', 'Sugar Growing – Past, Present and Future', Letter to the Editor', *Queenslander*, 8 December 1883.

<sup>79</sup> Historians Geoffrey Bolton and Joe Harris have endorsed in general Perkins contemporary opinion on Griffith's action. Bolton argued that 'to the planters Griffith seemed to be either an opportunist agitating the working class voter or an impractical idealist.' Harris asserted that Griffith 'posed as the champion of the working man, and used the coloured labour question as a vote-catcher'. Patrick Perkins, 'Transcontinental Railway Bill – Second Reading – Resumption of Debate', *QPD*, 39 (1883): 139; Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920*. 145; Joe Harris, 'The Struggle Against Pacific Island Labour: 1868-1902', *Labour History*, 15 (November 1969): 40-48.

<sup>80</sup> Griffith's biographer Roger Joyce considered it 'difficult to identify' Griffith's own convictions on coloured labour. Joyce added that 'whatever his personal feelings, he used the issue as a political stick to beat his opponents.' Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 73.



opposition [Griffith] advocated the total exclusion of black labour'.<sup>81</sup> The *Queenslander* commented in July 1883 that 'no living man can glean from Mr. Griffith's declarations in respect of coloured labour anything on which to base a settled policy'.<sup>82</sup> Broadly stated, it would seem that Griffith throughout his political career presented a pragmatic flexibility on the coloured labour question, an adaptability that was essentially guided by populist and economic factors.<sup>83</sup> Prior to mid-1883 Griffith had been in essence an advocate for tighter regulatory control over the labour trade.

Griffith's election manifesto, published in August 1883, laid emphasis on the 'gravity and difficulty of the labour question'.<sup>84</sup> Griffith employed conventional racist arguments to depict the negative social ramifications of coloured labour and though he did not overtly declare an abolitionist platform the language he used led reasonably to that inference.<sup>85</sup> In an election speech in Brisbane in mid-August Griffith declared that:

The kanakas had contributed to the development of the sugar industry, and it would be unfair to say they should suddenly be stopped; but it must be understood that they are not to be the labour of the future....We had seen how there had grown up a strong vested interest in kanakas, which could only be cut down by degrees and by affirming at the earliest possible

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<sup>81</sup> Hamilton stated that he 'had looked at every speech the hon. gentleman had delivered on the subject, and found that they would read in any way. Read in the Northern constituencies they could be construed to mean that he always approved of the introduction of coolies under restrictions. Read in the southern constituencies they could be construed to mean quite the reverse.' J. Hamilton, 'Indian Immigration Bill', 1 November 1882, *QPD*, 38 (1882): 1391.

<sup>82</sup> 'Some Election Writs', *Queenslander*, 28 July 1883.

<sup>83</sup> In the July 1883 debate on the Transcontinental Railway Bill, Patrick Perkins, Minister for Lands in McIlwraith's ministry ascribed Griffith's flexibility to his overt desire to be Premier: 'What I desire to call attention to is, that the leader of the Opposition has seen in this question of the Transcontinental Railway a short cut to office. He has shifted his opinions all round; he has shown so many fronts to the House from time to time, both on this and on the coolie question, solely as a short cut to office, and because it seemed the most likely manner to find friends in a most unnatural way'. 'Transcontinental Railway Bill – Second Reading – Resumption of Debate', *QPD*, 39 (1883): 139.

<sup>84</sup> S.W. Griffith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Queenslander*, 4 August 1883.

<sup>85</sup> Griffith's position he declared was that he was 'satisfied that it is impossible for an inferior servile class and a free white labouring population to permanently exist side by side....If the coolies are introduced...the white population, unable to compete on equal terms, will sooner or later give place.' *Ibid.*

moment that the labour of the future is to be white and not black.<sup>86</sup>

The *Queenslander* in response queried: 'Does he seriously mean what he said, that he would have no coloured labour in this colony in the future'.<sup>87</sup> The more potent racist arguments employed in Griffith's platform dealt with the controversial question of 'Coolie' labour. Invoked with effect were the subjective arguments that engendered and reflected the colonial fear of Asia that of being numerically overwhelmed in conjunction with the broader threat of disease. Griffith thus declared that 'he dreaded coolies' because there 'were unlimited numbers of them' and predicted that if 'Coolie' labour was introduced 'we should have 1,000,000 coolies in the colony in a short time' and 'deadly Asiatic diseases...with them'.<sup>88</sup> In this environment the 'white population' Griffith argued would 'sooner or later give place'.<sup>89</sup> To avert this alarming prospect a Liberal administration would 'at once' introduce preventative legislation.<sup>90</sup> Griffith, it was argued 'found it pleasanter, and from an electioneering point of view more profitable, to swim with the popular current'.<sup>91</sup> A political opportunist was how his opponents perceived him but arguably as a candidate endeavouring to form government it would seem illogical for Griffith not to harness the evident anxieties of the public.

The public's protest against McIlwraith's proposed introduction of Indian 'Coolies' had been widespread and organised, with Anti-Coolie Leagues established throughout the colony. The entanglement of the Pacific Island labour question with McIlwraith's 1883 'extraordinary undertaking' in New Guinea crystallised

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<sup>86</sup> In this speech in Brisbane in mid-August Griffith had been quite clear on his intention to exclude Coolies and the Chinese. 'Mr. Griffith at Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

<sup>87</sup> 'Editorial', 'Mr. Griffith at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

<sup>88</sup> 'Mr. Griffith at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883; S.W. Griffith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Queenslander*, 4 August 1883.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

opposition, in the south in particular, against the continuation of any form of coloured labour.<sup>92</sup> The New Guinea incident had furthermore added a new dimension to the existent economic and social contamination fears. The attempted annexation of New Guinea had prompted an intense public scrutiny of Queensland's Indigenous and coloured labour policies. The composite effect of the public denouncement of Queensland by humanitarian and religious bodies and the Imperial Government's refusal to sanction the annexation on the basis of 'the difficulties...in connexion with the labour traffic' was that coloured labour was seen in the public and political domain to have cast a 'foul stain...on the fair fame of Queensland'.<sup>93</sup> To remove this indignity emerged as a compelling argument against the colony's continued reliance on a coloured labour force. The Colonial Office noted in early 1884 that 'there have been traces lately that the "stigma"...cast upon the Colony has done good rather than harm.'<sup>94</sup> Existent urban-based campaigns against coloured labour were stepped up in response to the events surrounding New Guinea and abolition became an imperative 'for the sake of the honour of Queensland'.<sup>95</sup> The extent of popular feeling garnered against coloured labour by the controversies of 1883 was such that even the pro-McIlwraith and planter newspaper the *Queenslander* conceded that:

The Pacific labour trade is doomed. We have done what we could to purify it and failed. It cannot be made pure except by the maintenance of conditions so stringent that they must kill it. If we ourselves do not put a stop to the traffic we may be sure that, sooner or later, the Imperial Government will intervene, and its intervention will have the sympathy of all our Australian neighbours.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> 'Editorial', 'Mr. Griffith at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

<sup>92</sup> Charles Dutton was the Minister for Lands in Griffith's new Ministry. Dutton, 'Annexation of New Guinea', 26 November 1884, *QPD*, 44(1884): 1584.

<sup>93</sup> Rose, 'The Hon. Samuel Walker Griffith': 84.

<sup>94</sup> F. Fuller, 29 February 1884, Colonial Office Minute, 'Case of Labour Vessel "Ceara"', Queensland No. 3314, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/44 AJCP.

<sup>95</sup> 'Mr. Douglas at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 11 August 1883.

<sup>96</sup> 'Mr. Griffith at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883; 'The Pacific Island Trade', *Queenslander*, 22 December 1883.

The labour reforms outlined in Griffith's platform, whether based on principle or expediency, were acknowledged as being 'instrumental' in the Liberal party's attainment of its 'very large majority' in parliament.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, it was claimed that 'the grand verdict of the polling booths' had provided Griffith with the mandate for abolition.<sup>98</sup>

On the accession of his Government Griffith immediately directed his attention to the prompt resolution of the 'Coolie' labour issue. In the first few weeks of his administration, Griffith officially terminated the negotiations between Queensland and the Indian Government for the introduction of Indian 'Coolies'.<sup>99</sup> Second, he undertook to repeal the 1862 *Indian Immigration Act*. The Legislative Council blocked this endeavour, but Griffith's determination to fulfil his electoral promises was apparent.<sup>100</sup> The *Northern Miner* an overtly working class and racial newspaper rejoiced at Griffith's action. Griffith, the paper figuratively declared, was plucking out the 'rotten material' and laying down 'a solid and enduring foundation of white marble to endure for ages'.<sup>101</sup>

The second and more prominent facet of Griffith's labour policy addressed the question of Pacific Island labour. A Bill to amend the 1880 *Pacific Island Labourers Act* was introduced in January 1884. The central tenet of this Bill was to restrict the employment of Pacific Islanders to 'field work' in the cultivation of sugar cane, cotton, tea, coffee, rice and spices, or other forms of tropical or semi-tropical

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<sup>97</sup> 'A Northern Resident', 'Separation', Letter to the Editor, *Queenslander*, 15 November 1884.

<sup>98</sup> 'The Coolie is Dead', *Northern Miner*, 14 January 1884.

<sup>99</sup> Griffith to Secretary to the Government of India, 13 December 1883, Queensland Parliament. Legislative Assembly (1859-1922), *Coloured Labour in Queensland: A Collective of Papers Ordered to be Printed by the Legislative Assembly, 1861-1906*. .

<sup>100</sup> 'The Indian Immigration Acts Repeal Bill' was finally passed in 1886. Moles, 'The Indian Coolie Labour Issue in Queensland,' 1345-72.

production.<sup>102</sup> Griffith argued that much of the opposition to coloured labour had arisen from the fact that this cheaper form of labour had been employed in areas that brought them into competition with white workers.<sup>103</sup> In the Legislative Council it was questioned whether 'the superior Chamber' should pass a Bill that was a politically expedient measure on behalf of the new Government.<sup>104</sup> Griffith acknowledged that the Bill was 'a *modus vivendi* to meet present conditions...an attempt to mitigate' white labour's concerns over economic competition.<sup>105</sup> He further emphasised that the underlying reasoning for his action was that 'every kanaka engaged in these occupations is displacing a white man.'<sup>106</sup> Griffith had actively garnered working class support and it had contributed significantly to his electoral success. The pace at which the Bill was introduced and the fact that Griffith stressed that it was not the 'final settlement' of the issue, did reflect a pressing need to mollify the vocal concerns of a significant sector of his political supporters.<sup>107</sup> Legislative action on the 'Kanaka' question was promptly followed with further restrictions on the Chinese, perceived as the more contemptible threat to white labour. The *Northern Miner* succinctly declared that the purpose of the amendments to the *Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act* was 'to screw down the Chinese'.<sup>108</sup> While these measures were generally described as 'bold and heroic',

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<sup>101</sup> Prior to the establishment of the *Boomerang* in Brisbane in 1887 the *Northern Miner* was most outspoken advocate of the white worker's racist cause. 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 12 January 1884.

<sup>102</sup> The occupations specifically listed were working or attending machinery used to make products from the primary produce; grooms or coachmen and domestic or household service. If an 'islander' was found to be employed in any occupation other than field labour a penalty of up to £20 would be incurred. 'Pacific Island Labourers Act Amendment Bill – Second Reading', *QPD*, 41 (1884): 80-90.

<sup>103</sup> Griffith, 'Ministerial Statement', 11 January 1884, *QPD*, 41 (1884): 36.

<sup>104</sup> Hon. T.L. Murray-Prior cited in, 'Pacific Island Labourers Act Amendment Bill', 28 February 1884, *QPD*, 41 (1884): 104.

<sup>105</sup> Griffith, 21 January 1884, cited in *Ibid*: 133.

<sup>106</sup> 5 February 1884, *Ibid*: 236.

<sup>107</sup> The *Northern Miner* repeatedly stressed this point: 'the white men of the colony have spoken at the elections, and declared that this shall be a "white man's" colony.' Griffith, 23 January 1884, cited in *Ibid*: 133; 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 31 January 1884.

<sup>108</sup> The entrance tax of Chinese was increased from £10 to £20 and the quota of Chinese immigrants was reduced. The limit on the number of Chinese each vessel was permitted to carry was raised from one per every ten tons of the ship's capacity to one per fifty tons. 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 25 January 1884; Kathryn Cronin, 'On a Fast Boat to Queensland: The Chinese Influx onto Queensland's Goldfields,' Kathryn Cronin,

the developing white labour pressure group categorised them as moderate reforms and accordingly continued to press for more radical policies from the Liberal Government.<sup>109</sup> Yet they were sufficient, the *Northern Miner* asserted, to 'prove to the people of England that Queensland is determined to wipe away the black spot on her escutcheon and no longer submit to be called a slave colony.'<sup>110</sup>

The 'disgrace' of slavery was however promptly reinstated in 1884 when a series of allegations surfaced against the labour trade. What was revealed through these indictments was the extent to which Queensland's labour vessels had employed nefarious methods to secure recruits from New Guinea's waters in 1883 and 1884.<sup>111</sup> The 'prejudice of the public mind' against the continued maintenance of 'Kanaka' labour was as a consequence further provoked and this again reinvigorated community appeals for abolition.<sup>112</sup>

In mid-December 1883, Reverend James Chalmers, a missionary stationed in New Guinea, forewarned in a letter to the *Brisbane Courier* that abuses had occurred:

From time to time we see the labour question commented on in your columns, and are much interested to notice that of late your influence seems to go against the "iniquitous" kanaka labour traffic. I use the word "iniquitous" advisedly, and when facts that will soon be published, or perhaps laid before the home officials, are read by you, you too, I doubt not, will use the same word. That your Mr. Griffith should in the least countenance it is to us astonishing and unexplainable. Is it possible that he can quietly endure having his country spoken of as a nigger establishment,

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(ed.), *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993: 254-88.

<sup>109</sup> Rose, 'The Hon. Samuel Walker Griffith': 84; 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 25 January 1884.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> 'The Condemned Men', *Queenslander*, 13 December 1884.

<sup>112</sup> Craig, 'The Sugar Industry,' 54-64.

and his compatriots as slaveholders. It is said, and is, I believe, going to be proved, that a large majority of your kanakas have been stolen.<sup>113</sup>

In early 1883 an intensive recruitment campaign by Queensland labour vessels had been instigated by the success of the Fijian recruiting vessel *Lord of the Isles* in the Bismarck Archipelago. Fourteen of the subsequent thirty-two voyages undertaken by Queensland labour vessels in this region were investigated.<sup>114</sup> The disclosure of the extent to which recruiters had used 'cruelly deceptive and altogether illegal' methods resulted in several criminal prosecutions and the establishment of a full-scale government investigation.<sup>115</sup>

Criminal charges were brought forward against several persons on a number of vessels but the 'murderous atrocities' that occurred on board the *Hopeful's* May to July 1884 voyage became the most infamous.<sup>116</sup> In early December 1884 the *Hopeful's* recruiting agent, Neil McNeil, and the boatswain Barnard Williams were convicted of murder and sentenced to death to be carried into effect on the 29<sup>th</sup> December.<sup>117</sup> This was an extraordinary event and the conviction came 'with a shock on the community' and prompted 'widespread and earnest agitation' over the severity of the sentences.<sup>118</sup> Well-attended public meetings sought ways 'to

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<sup>113</sup> Rev. J. Chalmers, 'Recruiting South Sea Island Labour. Letter to the *Courier* dated 18 November 1883, *Queenslander*, 15 December 1883.'

<sup>114</sup> Corris, 'Blackbirding' in New Guinea Waters, 1883-84,' 85-105.

<sup>115</sup> 'Report with Minutes of Evidence taken before The Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into the circumstances under which Labourers have been introduced into Queensland from New Guinea and other Islands', *QVP*, 2 (1885): 822.

<sup>116</sup> Griffith outlined in an interview with a deputation that reports had identified that at least 40 Islanders from the D'Entrecasteaux group had been killed during the *Hopeful's* voyage. Griffith stated that when he first read the report 'he had exclaimed that it would have been proper thing if every man had been hung from the yard arm.' 'The Hopeful Murderers', *Queenslander*, 20 December 1884.

<sup>117</sup> The *Hopeful's* Captain Lewis Shaw and the Government Agent H. Schofield were found guilty of kidnapping and were sentenced to life imprisonment, the first three years to spent in irons. Another member of the *Hopeful's* crew was sentenced to 10 years goal and two others to seven years. The 'peculiarity' of McNeil and Williams' trial as the Times put it was that evidence of Islanders was admitted for the first time. Corris, 'Blackbirding' in New Guinea Waters, 1883-84,' 85-105; Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 98-99; 'The Hopeful Murderers', *Queenslander*, 20 December 1884; 'Editorial', *Times*, 23 January 1885.

<sup>118</sup> 'Moot Points', *Queenslander*, 6 December 1884; 'Summary for Europe', *Queenslander*, 27 December 1884.

obtain mitigation of the sentences of death'.<sup>119</sup> Within one week, twenty-two petitions were submitted, some signed by thousands, and each appealed to the Governor to 'extend his prerogative of mercy'.<sup>120</sup> The extent of this action was not reflective of any change in tact on the coloured labour question quite the contrary it presented through these forums a clear expression of the public's opposition. Petitioners, and speakers at the various public meetings, identified themselves as opponents to the labour trade and further declared that they were 'horrified and disgusted by the atrocities' and felt 'keenly the disgrace inflicted thereby on the colony' and were in sympathy with the 'Government vindicating the honour of Queensland'.<sup>121</sup> In the appeal for mercy one line of reasoning was repeatedly advanced. The guilt of the two men was generally accepted but it was argued that they were 'victims of an accursed system', that had operated under the authority and with the support of each Government throughout its twenty year existence.<sup>122</sup> More particularly under Government sanction the crimes of kidnapping and murder, which the two had been convicted of, had been 'winked at in the past'.<sup>123</sup> It was therefore argued that the two should not be executed because of Queensland's past policy, for in effect 'from the Governor down to the most humble individual they were all guilty of the crime'.<sup>124</sup> In this emotive atmosphere

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<sup>119</sup> 'The Condemned Men', *Queenslander*, 13 December 1884.

<sup>120</sup> One petition presented to Griffith had 5000 signatures from various parts of the colony. 'The Condemned Men', *Queenslander*, 13 December 1884; 'The Hopeful Murderers', *Queenslander*, 20 December 1884.

<sup>121</sup> 'The Condemned Men', *Queenslander*, 13 December 1884.

<sup>122</sup> At this public meeting held at the Town Hall in Brisbane it was asserted that the crimes committed by McNeil and Williams were ones 'that had been winked at in the past'. 'The Condemned Men', *Queenslander*, 13 December 1884.

<sup>123</sup> The *Times*' correspondent in Queensland also argued this point that 'hitherto there was scarcely been a conviction brought home to a European of murder or maltreatment of Polynesians'. The convictions were generally a welcome surprise, Hugh Romilly outlined that 'the murders were so brutal and the evidence so clear that the jury actually convicted two out of the six.' 'The Condemned Men', *Queenslander*, 13 December 1884; 'Australia – Queensland', *Times*, 23 January 1885; Romilly to unknown 14 March 1885, Romilly, *Letters from the Western Pacific and Mashonaland 1878-1891*: 207-10.

<sup>124</sup> During an interview with a deputation Griffith was hoped that the appeal for leniency was not 'because they were blackfellows and savages who were shot?' One member of the deputation explained that it was because 'That the colony had made it legal to go to these islands and recruit islanders....We are not blameless'. *Ibid*; 'The Hopeful Murderers', *Queenslander*, 20 December 1884.



the Executive Council reconvened on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December to reconsider the sentences. Griffith was opposed to reducing the sentences but by a majority of 6 to 2 execution was commuted to life imprisonment.<sup>125</sup>

As a direct result of the extent of the atrocities detailed in the various criminal trials, Griffith appointed in December 1884 a Royal Commission to further inquire into the circumstances under which island labourers had been introduced into Queensland.<sup>126</sup> The Commission's report, handed down in May 1885, not surprisingly condemned the recruiting methods used on all the voyages investigated.<sup>127</sup> Though the report made no specific recommendations a series of actions were instituted in response to it.<sup>128</sup> Those identified as being directly involved in illegal or questionable practices were dismissed and debarred from future employment in the labour trade. A permanent embargo on recruitment in the New Guinea region was applied and in June and July 1885, 404 of the 625 Islanders recruited by the labour vessels investigated by the Commission were repatriated.<sup>129</sup> The most significant action to emerge from this 'record of brutality of

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<sup>125</sup> In 1888, the case of the *Hopeful* would again cause controversy. A constitutional crisis was provoked by the seemingly innocuous episode of the Government advising the Governor to exercise his royal prerogative of mercy to remit the sentence of Benjamin Kitt who had been sentenced, in March 1888, to three years for stealing two pairs of boots valued at 40 shillings. Musgrave refused and the newly elected McIlwraith Government tendered their resignation. Musgrave believed that the action over Kitt was simply a test case to pave the way for the *Hopeful* prisoners to be pardoned. The Secretary of State for Colonies interceded and instructed the release of Kitt. A petition with 28,070 signatures was presented in October 1888 appealing for the remission of the remainder of the sentences of the *Hopeful* prisoners. In February 1889 the Administrator of the Government Sir William McGregor, granted a pardon to all the *Hopeful* men, except for the Government Agent Schofield who had died in prison. Sir Anthony Musgrave had died in October 1888. Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 99; I.D. McNaughtan, 'The Case of Benjamin Kitt,' *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 4: 4 (1951): 535-58.

<sup>126</sup> Various voyages of the labour recruitment vessels the *Ceara*, *Lizzie*, *Hopeful*, *Sybil*, *Forest King*, and the *Heath* were investigated. 'Report with Minutes of Evidence taken before The Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into the circumstances under which Labourers have been introduced into Queensland from New Guinea and other Islands', *QVP*, 2:2 (1885): 797-839.

<sup>127</sup> This Commission sat for 43 days and in the course of collecting evidence interviewed 480 Island Labourers. *Ibid*: 814-815; Corris, 'Blackbirding' in New Guinea Waters, 1883-84': 98-99.

<sup>128</sup> Recommendations did not appear to be within the field of enquiry as the focus solely concentrated on the examining and presenting an outline of methods of recruiting pursued on board each ship. *Ibid*.

<sup>129</sup> Corris details that 97 of these recruits had died on the plantations. The high mortality rate of Islanders from the New Guinea region further enhanced the argument for abolition. Compensation to planters who awarded under the 'Act to Make Provision for the Assessment and Payment of Compensation to Certain Employers of

the worst possible kind, of simple indifference to human life and human suffering in the pursuit of unhallowed gain' was the enactment of legislation in November 1885 that set the timeframe for the termination of the labour trade.<sup>130</sup>

The recruitment scandals that unfolded during 1884 and the wide-ranging publicity given to them did provide the most compelling argument for the abolition of the labour trade. Yet, it is apparent that Griffith had begun to formulate this measure before the extent of the abuses was known. In February 1884 Griffith made his first direct reference to the possibility of abolition. He informed Governor Musgrave that if the regulations introduced by the government, to ensure that no license was issued to a vessel unless the master and crew including the recruiting agent were approved by the government, 'are unavailing I think that it will be imperative for the honour of the Colony to refuse to grant any licenses to labour vessels.'<sup>131</sup> Fundamentally, Griffith was still promoting a regulatory approach rather than abolition. In May, as indictments against the labour trade were beginning to emerge, Griffith refined his position:

This government is deeply sensible of the scandal that has been brought upon this Colony and the British flag by the want of due supervision of the Pacific labour trade, and is firmly resolved that if their endeavours to remove the cause of the scandal prove ineffectual no alternative will be left but to put an end to the trade itself.<sup>132</sup>

Though Griffith evidently continued to hope that stricter regulations would avert the necessity to terminate the trade his intention was clear. The impetus for a

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Pacific Island Labourers who have been returned to their native islands by order of the Governor in Council.' The total cost to the government was £20,000. *Ibid*: 93-102; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty Years*: 70.

<sup>130</sup> 'Editorial', *Times*, 23 January 1885.

<sup>131</sup> Griffith to Musgrave, 6 February 1884 attached to Musgrave to Lord Derby Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 February 1884, Colonial Office Minute No. 5766, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/44 AJCP.

<sup>132</sup> Griffith to Musgrave, 7 May 1884 attached to Musgrave to Lord Derby, 20 June 1884, Colonial Office Minute No. 13215, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/44 AJCP.

definitive solution was undoubtedly the public and political reaction to 'all the abominations and horrors of this slave trade'.<sup>133</sup> Entwined in the public protests on the 'undue severity' of the sentences imposed on the *Hopeful* men in December 1884 was a public acknowledgement that the cases had created a 'prevailing...feeling of gratitude that these things were likely to be put to a stop.'<sup>134</sup> By January 1885, it was apparent to W. T. Wawn, the Captain of the labour vessel the *Lizzie*, that Griffith's protestations and determination to stamp out abuses in the labour trade were the precursors to his real objective of 'stopping it altogether'.<sup>135</sup> The proceedings and the May report of the Royal Commission had 'exposed before the world so completely' the 'evil' entailed in the labour trade and this to all intents and purposes prevented any 'justification for its continuance.'<sup>136</sup>

In October 1885, on the introduction of the bill 'To Further Amend the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880, and to put a Limit to its Operation' Griffith declared with confidence that the Bill's intent had both political and public endorsement.<sup>137</sup> The limited opposition to the Bill, particularly to Clause 14, which contained a 'matter of very considerable importance', substantiated his contention.<sup>138</sup> Clause 14 decreed that after 31<sup>st</sup> December 1890 no licences would be granted for the recruitment and introduction of Islander labour into the colony: 'black labour was to

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<sup>133</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 2 June 1885.

<sup>134</sup> 'The Hopeful Murderers', *Queenslander*, 20 December 1884.

<sup>135</sup> Wawn was later disbarred from the labour trade following the Commissions denunciation of his recruiting methods on two voyages, W.T. Wawn, 'Queensland and New Guinea', Letter to the Editor, dated Melbourne 26 January 1885, *Times*, 3 April 1885.

<sup>136</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 2 June 1885.

<sup>137</sup> Griffith cited in 'Pacific Island Labourers Act Amendment Bill', 15 October 1885, *QPD*, 45 (1885): 1078.

<sup>138</sup> The most contested clause in the bill was Clause 11 that authorized Police Magistrates to hear and settle 'every complaint of a breach of the provisions'. Much to the insult of planters and magistrates it was asserted that Magistrates had to be replaced in the hearing of cases related to the sugar industry because planters would 'packed the bench' and therefore influence the decisions in their favour. The Legislative Council made the recommendation that this Clause be omitted. The Legislative Assembly voted 23 to 15 to reject this recommendation. *Ibid*: 206-208, 1081-1091, 1374-1376.

come to an end.'<sup>139</sup> The sugar industry was effectively granted, Griffith argued, an eight-year 'breathing time' to secure with government assistance an alternative but acceptable source of labour from Europe.<sup>140</sup> Northern representatives argued that the Bill would 'be the last straw on the camel's back....it will be the death knell of this lingering [sugar] industry.'<sup>141</sup> Such practical or economic considerations were however overridden by the Bill's social objective. Thus, Thomas McIlwraith though he did not believe that North Queensland's sugar industry could be carried on successfully without 'black labour' conceded that he would support the Bill 'because the colony could not go on creditably before the world and continue the South Sea Island traffic.'<sup>142</sup> The necessity and determination to 'purify' Queensland of 'the evil odour and bad fame' that its coloured labour policy had brought on the colony 'throughout the world' had been a recurrent and decisive feature of the political and popular debate on the issue.<sup>143</sup> The permanent solution, presented in this Bill, outwardly fulfilled this purifying function.

A notable feature of this debate, beyond the remarkable ease with which this radical measure was adopted, was that no reference was made to the agitation for the territorial separation of Northern Queensland into a self-governing colony. In the Queensland context at this time the question of separation was a much

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<sup>139</sup> Henry Jordan, cited in *Ibid*: 1090.

<sup>140</sup> Though recruitment was to stop in five years the final recruits that would be introduced would be under three year contracts and therefore effecting an eight year timeframe. German labour was idea contemplated by the Queensland Government however Queensland's Agent for Emigration in Europe A.R.H. Pietzcker received a very poor reception in Germany. Denmark was an alternative but its government proved to be as obstructive as Germany's. In 1890 Italy was investigated as a possible source of labour. In December 1891 the first shipload of Italians arrived in Queensland, it was however a short-lived experiment the Italian workers proved to be more expensive and less efficient than Polynesians. *Ibid*: 1143; Richmond, 'Government and Economic Development in Queensland 1883-1914': 150-58.

<sup>141</sup> John Macrossan cited in *Ibid*: 1089.

<sup>142</sup> McIlwraith did proceed to ascribe some blame for the colony's worsening image to Griffith. McIlwraith contended that 'they were placed in a much worse position – one which was forced upon them – in the eyes of the world, by the highly sensational style in which the high-handed actions of the Premier had been put before the English public.' McIlwraith cited in *Ibid*: 1145.

<sup>143</sup> Lumley Hill cited in *Ibid*: 1082.

publicised and controversial issue that had been provocatively tied to the coloured labour question. In April 1885, Griffith in an official letter to Governor Musgrave had categorised the Northern separation campaign as a planter-based agitation designed solely to circumvent his new coloured labour restrictions.<sup>144</sup> The contentiousness of this theory had the effect of altering the entire complexion of these two local issues. Moreover, the volatility of the local debate on separation would contribute significantly to a persuasive national and racist argument for federation and at the same time established an enduring local force that would significantly influence Queensland's involvement in the federal movement.



**Figure 5.2: *Queensland Punch and Figaro*, 27 February 1886**

At intermittent periods throughout the 1860s and 1870s separatist agitation had essentially been a barometer of the central and northern regions discontent with

<sup>144</sup> Griffith to Governor Musgrave, 1 April 1885, 'Proposed Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland',

the administrative policies of the Brisbane-based government. The manner in which public works expenditure was regionally distributed was the fundamental irritant. In the northern and central regions of the colony it was repeatedly argued that the south was consistently and prejudicially apportioned the bulk of the public revenue. Bowen's *Port Denison Times* therefore argued that:

'We have been and are politically tyrannised over and robbed by Brisbane...our position has resembled that of the outlying provinces of the early Roman Empire, which were left to the tender mercies of needy pro-consuls.'<sup>145</sup>

The pattern of government action that had emerged in response to these early manifestations of separatist sentiment was generally a nominal attempt to placate them through partial concessions. This did not address the issue of regionalism and served only to demonstrate that separatist agitation proved an effective lever to extract concessions from parliament. Fiscal concerns by the 1880s were no longer the main concern. Separatism in the northern portion of the colony emerged as a symptomatic expression of two interconnected factors. First, the different stage of economic and social development in the region and second as a consequence of this there emerged a growing divide between the regions principal economic and social interests and that of the south. The basis therefore of the northern regions concerns was their belief that the south, through their numeric dominance in the Parliament, had and continued to impede the progress of the north by consistently relegating their needs and interests as secondary to the south's. In July 1882 the Member for Mackay, Maurice Hume Black declared in Parliament that

he would be the last to hope for a difference of interests between North and South. As long as they remained one, he believed Queensland was

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*Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 5-9.

<sup>145</sup> Quote cited in Glen Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland: A Study in Economic Nationalism*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1973: 23.

destined to become the greatest of the Australian colonies....At the same time, should the time ever come when it would be necessary for the protection of the rights of the North that it should separate, the North would have nothing to lose, and the South everything.<sup>146</sup>

The formation of an official representative body, the Northern Separation League, in Townsville in July 1882 confirmed an intensification of the North's general discontent with the Brisbane-based Government's administration of their region. A fundamental but problematic feature of the League's initial structure was its intention to be a cohesive non-partisan organisation. The concerns and aims of the north, it was argued, cut across party politics. But in the politically volatile environment engendered in 1882/83 by McIlwraith's Transcontinental Railway and 'Coolie' labour proposals such party neutrality could not be maintained and as a result the League's organisers suspended activities.<sup>147</sup> Separatist action was 'revived with vigour' in September 1884 with Separation Leagues formed in twelve of the North's principal towns.<sup>148</sup> The grievances outlined at these initial meetings did not tender one particular compelling issue but rather a conglomerate of matters. These ranged from the local discontent over the region's lack of parliamentary representation, the unfair allocation of public works particularly

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<sup>146</sup> Maurice Hume Black, (1830-1899) Sugar Planter and Member of Legislative Assembly for Mackay from March 1881 to 29 April 1899; Separationist and delegate to the United Kingdom in 1887 for Queensland Separation League. M.H. Black, 'Address in Reply', 4 July 1882, *QPD*, 37 (1882): 40; Waterson, *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929*:15-16; G.C. Bolton, 'Maurice Hume Black', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 3 (1984): 169-170.

<sup>147</sup> In a long letter to the *Times* Thankfull Willmet, President of the Northern Separation Council detailed the history and the object of the separation movement. On the basis that the Imperial Government held the authority to grant territorial separation much of the campaign was initially played out in Britain and in the British press. James Garrick, Queensland's Agent General in London countered almost all the letters published in the *Times* by various members of the Separation League and submitted for publication Griffith's official response to separatist demands. Indicative of the extent of the letter campaign in Britain was the *Times* comment in October 1885 that 'Queenslanders...wield pens of ready writers; and the prospects of many instalments of correspondence on the scale of Mr. Willmet's and Mr. Griffith's epistles would be alarming'. T. Willmet, 'The Separation Question in Queensland', Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 30 September 1885; 'Editorial', *Times*, 12 October 1885.

<sup>148</sup> The territorial division was proposed was 'separation at Cape Palmerston following the watershed of the gulf country to the South Australian border.' Renewed efforts were principally initiated by a series of letters published in the *Townsville Bulletin* by Willmet that outlined the necessity for Separation. The Townsville Committee distributed circulars on the topic, which 'excited considerable attention'. Leagues were subsequently formed in Mackay, Cooktown, Bowen, Ayr, Hughenden, Herberton, Cloncurry, Ingham and Port Douglas. *Ibid*; The Council of the Queensland Northern Separation League to Governor Musgrave, 2 May

railways or the more specific antagonisms of the economic impact of the *Crowns Land Act* and the ad valorem duty on machinery.<sup>149</sup> The question of coloured labour did factor amongst these irritants but it was not the foundational basis for the movement. It featured as one of the many grievances held against the southern government. Moreover, its influence was of a diverse nature. Thus Townsville's *North Queensland Bulletin* argued in August 1884 that Griffith's labour policy would 'hasten Separation, by binding Northern centres of population together to protect themselves against being robbed of their right to develop the natural wealth of North Queensland.'<sup>150</sup> Townsville was the headquarters of the separatist cause and its economic basis was not dependent upon the sugar industry. Furthermore, many of its Committee members were vehemently opposed to coloured labour. The premise that was being advanced by the *North Queensland Bulletin* and one that was repeatedly expounded, was that the North under the current system of governance was at the 'mercy of an unvarying sectional majority' primarily composed of southern members.<sup>151</sup> With eight northern members in the Legislative Assembly's total of fifty-five, the North argued that:

with all the apparent freedom and power of what the Premier calls "Constitutional Government," they have left to them not the slightest real control over their own political affairs, their public loans, or other public works...for almost all practical purposes they might as well leave their electoral right unemployed.<sup>152</sup>

The legislative enactment of Griffith's labour policy was an extraordinary but representative example, the North argued, of how the South's 'overwhelming

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1885, 'Proposed Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 10-15; Doran, 'North Queensland Separatism in the Nineteenth Century.' 151-55.

<sup>149</sup> In the Hughenden area protest was provoked by the Government's failure to provide for a water conservation scheme. *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *North Queensland Bulletin* cited in 'Local and Other News', *Mackay Mercury*, 9 August 1884.

<sup>151</sup> T. Willmetts, 'The Separation Question in Queensland', Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 30 September 1885.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*



preponderance in numbers' imposed policies that were detrimental to their 'industrial progress.'<sup>153</sup> Griffith's reforms brought the separatist issue 'to a head' for it manifestly demonstrated the 'entirely diverse interests of tropical and sub-tropical Queensland'.<sup>154</sup>

To the sugar industry in particular, Griffith's restrictive labour policy was a compounding problem for an industry already in difficulty. Under the mounting pressure of 'three bad seasons in succession', a fall in world sugar prices, increased competition from cheaper imports from China and Java, and a 'most critical and alarming' shortage of labour, the planters believed Griffith's policy was an unmitigated harassment of a valuable industry at a time when government assistance was required.<sup>155</sup> The prevailing belief was that the sugar industry was 'on the verge of ruin' and within this context separation was canvassed as an 'antidote' to forestall the industry's 'utter disintegration'.<sup>156</sup> Griffith's 'nasty jar' prompted the sugar planters to support the separatist cause and its objective of establishing a 'completely new regime' in the North.<sup>157</sup> The planter's support was however both beneficial and problematic for the separation movement.

As the principal industry in the North, sugar cultivation contributed significantly to the region's prosperity. The attachment of the planters' to the separatist cause did strengthen the authority of the campaign numerically and collaboratively. Beyond

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<sup>153</sup> The Colonial Office would in 1885 concur with this point of view, John Bramston in a minuted stated, 'The present Government is ruining one of the principal interests in the Colony and this demand for separation is the result. *Ibid*'; John Bramston, 3 June 1885, Colonial Office Minute, 17 January 1885, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/46 AJCP.

<sup>154</sup> J. Ewen Davidson, 'Queensland', Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 11 December 1884.

<sup>155</sup> Prices had fallen from £28 a ton in 1881 to £12 a ton in 1883. J. Ewen Davidson a planter for twenty years in the Mackay region claimed that these sugar prices represented the 'lowest prices known this century.' J. Ewen Davidson, 'Queensland', Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 11 December 1884; R.J. Jeffray to Griffith, 4 October 1884, 'Proposed Introduction of Labourers From British India', *JLC*, 34:1 (1884): 1186-1190; Figures cited in Doran, 'North Queensland Separatism the Nineteenth Century': fn42, 147.

the direct economic repercussions on the sugar industry from Griffith's so-called 'harassing' and 'strangling' policies, there were associated economic implications for the mercantile and service centres that were directly and indirectly reliant on the sugar industry.<sup>158</sup> The spread of unemployment, the reduction in wage levels and the generalised commercial depression in the North intensified the resentment towards Griffith's administration and associatively garnered support for separation from 'every class and industry in the North'.<sup>159</sup> To this diverse collective, which included leading merchants, traders, professional men, tradesmen, artisans, property owners and clergymen, the coloured labour question was not the specific concern but rather the broader economic and regional factors reflected in Griffith's action on the 'Coolie' and coloured labour question.<sup>160</sup> Fundamentally, that it represented 'a sample of the fetters of all kinds which compulsory union with the south imposes on their progress.'<sup>161</sup> In the context therefore of an economic downturn in the sugar industry Griffith's labour policy, as the separation historian Christine Doran argued, 'affected the timing, not the substance, of the separation case.'<sup>162</sup> The involvement of the planters in the movement did afford it the opportunity to present a powerful and coordinated case for separation yet, alternatively, it laid the cause open to the charge that separation 'was a thinly disguised design for the introduction of coloured labour.'<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> 'Editorial', *Mackay Mercury*, 9 August 1884.

<sup>157</sup> 'Editorial', *Mackay Mercury*, 24 October 1885.

<sup>158</sup> Griffith to Governor Musgrave, 1 April 1885, 'Proposed Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 5-9.

<sup>159</sup> E.S. Rawson, 'Separation in Queensland', Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 25 July 1885.

<sup>160</sup> T. Willmetts, 'The Separation Question in Queensland', Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 30 September 1885.

<sup>161</sup> 'Editorial', *Times*, 12 October 1885.

<sup>162</sup> Doran, 'North Queensland Separatism in the Nineteenth Century': 151.

<sup>163</sup> T. Willmetts, 'The Separation Question in Queensland', Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 30 September 1885.

In January 1885, the London-based J. E. Davidson, a former planter for twenty years in the Mackay district, and J.B. Lawes wrote to Lord Derby to express their 'sympathy with the present movement for the separation of the Northern, or tropical, from the Southern, or temperate portion of the Colony'.<sup>164</sup> This essentially private letter, unconnected with the Separation League, was the main source from which Griffith extracted the damaging allegation that the want of coloured labour was the fundamental reason for the planter initiated separatist action. Lord Derby had forwarded this letter to Griffith for his 'observations upon the statements and arguments' and Griffith's lengthy April 1885 reply, published in the *Brisbane Courier* and the London *Times*, activated a fierce and enduring debate on the separatist issue.<sup>165</sup> It is evident that Griffith had formed his opinion on the motivations behind the separatist agitation prior to this letter and had merely harnessed the opportunity to officially discredit the movement. In a later statement Griffith referred to a petition that had been presented to Parliament in October 1884.<sup>166</sup> The sole request of this petition, signed by 1574 northerners, was for the *Indian Immigration Act* to be amended so it could be 'put into practical working form' to 'remedy' the sugar industry's labour problem.<sup>167</sup> The Davidson and Lawes letter, Griffith purported, 'backed up' this petition in London.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> J.E. Davidson and J.B. Lawes to Lord Derby, 14 January 1885, 'Proposed Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 3-4.

<sup>165</sup> Griffith was not the first to query the planter's role in the resurgence of Northern Separatism. It is evident that the question of the sugar planter's involvement had arisen simultaneously with the movement's revival. The *Queenslander* in November 1884 discussed the Mackay Separation League's denial that the new agitation was 'generated by disappointed planters' and they advanced as evidence the fact that only three of its Committee members were planters who 'took no active part in the work.' Griffith's action of officially declaring his suspicions gave authority to the claim and in conjunction with the publication of his letter in Britain 'rumours' detrimental to the separatist cause spread. Derby to Governor Musgrave, 28 January 1885, *Ibid*: 3; *Brisbane Courier*, 14 April 1885; *Times*, 12 October 1885; 'Moot Points', *Queenslander*, 15 November 1884; T. Willmet, 'The Separation Question in Queensland', Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 30 September 1885.

<sup>166</sup> Griffith cited in 'Separation of Northern Queensland', 20 August 1886, *QPD*, 44 (1886): 451.

<sup>167</sup> Though no direct association with Mackay was in the petition a counter petition requested that 'the House will not accept the petition of the Mackay Coast Association in favour of coloured labour.' This second petition had 175 signatures. 'Labour on the Sugar Plantations Petition', October 1884, Correspondence Respecting Proposed Introduction of Labourers From British India, *QVP*, 2:2 (1884): 941-43.

<sup>168</sup> Griffith cited in 'Separation of Northern Queensland', 20 August 1886, *QPD*, 44 (1886): 451.

Davidson and Lawes had presented three 'principal reasons in favour of separation' one of which was the 'absolute diversity of interests' between the south and the north 'on the subject of coloured labour.'<sup>169</sup> They contended that 'coloured labour was absolutely necessary for tropical agriculture' and that this form of labour had been denied 'by the representatives of the South' to the detriment of the North-based sugar industry.<sup>170</sup> Griffith's 'observations' on this letter focused on:

the question of coloured labour, which I infer to be the main ground of their action. I suppose indeed that there are few persons in the colony who have not been aware from the first that the present agitation originated with the planters of Mackay, who have been disappointed in their desire to secure the introduction of coolies from India. Much care has, however been taken to conceal this aspect of the question; for there can be little doubt that if it were put forward openly as the ground for advocating Separation, the movement would almost immediately collapse....The 'planters' party'....now ask for self-government in Northern Queensland, that they may have the opportunity of introducing another kind of coloured labour under conditions to be fixed by themselves.<sup>171</sup>

Griffith, it was argued, had 'resorted to a deliberate system of misrepresentation...to do incalculable harm in misleading and deceiving the population of the country to the real issue at stake between the North and South.'<sup>172</sup> Griffith's action was considered of 'so grave a character' that a public

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<sup>169</sup> J.E. Davidson and J.B. Lawes to Lord Derby, 14 January 1885, *Ibid*: 3-4.

<sup>170</sup> The central premise of the often repeated argument that coloured labour was essential for the survival of the sugar industry was the belief that white labour was 'incapable' of maintaining the industry. This was based on physical and economic reasons. The degree of exposure to the tropical sun that was involved in fieldwork it was asserted 'though endured by strong young men eventually ends in their premature decay and physical wreck.' Economically, the higher wages of white labour would preclude the industry from being competitive with the other sugar growing countries that employed cheaper form of coloured labour. Griffith did not subscribe to this argument and claimed that the lumber business discredited the argument. These men 'had worked in the same jungles – a work much more arduous and quite injurious to health than the cultivation of sugar – and these men unanimously ridicule the notion that white men cannot do any kind of outdoor work in North Queensland.' J.E. Davidson and J.B. Lawes to Lord Derby, 14 January 1885, *Ibid*: 3-4; Memorandum on the Employment of Coloured Labour in Connection with the Sugar Industry', Queensland Parliament, *Coloured Labour in Queensland*. 2; Griffith to Governor Musgrave, 1 April 1885, 'Proposed Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 5-9.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>172</sup> Harold Finch-Hatton cited in 'Queensland Separation Movement,' *Queenslander*, 28 November 1885.

and prolific letter writing campaign was commenced to 'refute and hurl back the misstatements in his teeth'.<sup>173</sup>

In a letter to Governor Musgrave, the Council of the Northern Separation League repudiated in detail Griffith's 'designing and disingenuous innuendos'.<sup>174</sup> Displaying their obvious animosity towards Griffith the Council challenged the proposition of a concealed motive:

The main assumption in his letter is that almost everyone in the Colony has been aware from the first that the main object of the movement was to obtain coolie labour; the second, that if that object were put forward openly the movement would collapse; the inference is drawn that, therefore, it was concealed. But how can that be concealed of which almost everyone is aware? And if the movement, so far from collapsing, is growing stronger day by day – as it is, – one of two conclusions is inevitable: either the people of the North, with full knowledge that coolie labour is the ultimate object of that movement, nevertheless support it, and inferentially, coolie labour in the bargain; or that they believe its advocates to mean what they say, and decline to suspect them of designs repeatedly denied in every possible form of contradiction.<sup>175</sup>

To counter the specific contention that the present movement was initiated and financed by the 'planting party' a group of twenty Mackay planters wrote to Lord Derby in May 1885 and declared 'that the charge so insinuated by Mr. Griffith we empathetically deny'.<sup>176</sup> Furthermore, they stressed that they would not 'allow ourselves to be made the political stalking-horses from which to attack the movement for Separation, believing, as we do, that the movement rests on other

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<sup>173</sup> The Council of the Queensland Northern Separation League to Governor Musgrave, 2 May 1885, 'Proposed Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 10-15; Harold Finch-Hatton cited in 'Queensland Separation Movement,' *Queenslander*, 28 November 1885.

<sup>174</sup> The Council of the Queensland Northern Separation League to Governor Musgrave, 2 May 1885, 'Proposed Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 10-15.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*: 13-14.

<sup>176</sup> This letter was essentially ineffective because it had not gone through the proper channels. The planters had sent it straight to Lord Derby and not through the Governor and as a consequence the Colonial Office took no action. Messrs. Long and Others to Governor Musgrave, 13 May 1885, *Ibid.*: 16-17.

and more substantial grounds'.<sup>177</sup> Support for separation in the North had as a result of this controversy 'gained ground enormously'.<sup>178</sup> This factor and the veracity of the claims that separation was being advocated by 'the whole people and not by a section only' was most forcefully demonstrated in June 1886. Submitted to A.H. Palmer, Queensland's acting-governor, was a 'monster petition' appealing for separation that was 620 feet long and signed by 10,006 of the 11,800 names on the North's electoral roll.<sup>179</sup> The petition based its appeal for territorial separation on four grounds, the misappropriation of revenues and loans, the inadequacy of representation, a diversity of interests, and the remoteness of the seat of government.<sup>180</sup> The fundamental basis of these arguments bore a striking similarity to those advanced by the Moreton Bay District in their 1850s case for separation from New South Wales.<sup>181</sup> Yet, this apparent semblance failed

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<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> The popularity of separation was also demonstrated in more unusual ways, for example Alex Ivimey detailed that in Townsville there was an enormous increase in the sales of a soap product called 'Separation soap'. Its sales rose from 8 tons per month in March 1884 to an average 25 tons a month by 1888. Second, there was 'a good deal of outward visible signs of Separation in Townsville' in particular the word 'SEPARATION' was illuminated by gas light above Alderman Hanran's door, the Oyster Saloon and Café, and the Saddler shop. Joseph Ahearne, Vice President North Queensland Separation Council Delegate to London, 'The Separation of North Queensland', Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 4 February 1886; Aleck J. Ivimey, *Mining and Separation in North Queensland*. Brisbane: Woodcock and Powell Printers, 1888: 26-30.

<sup>179</sup> Griffith challenged the authenticity of signatures and had the petition analysed. He determined that 3,860 could not be identified as being at any time residents of the north, 349 had left and 111 had signed two or more times. Griffith argued that the genuine supporters were less than 6000. The petition was shipped to England and arrived on the 10 September and was presented by Edward Cunningham to Edward Stanhope, Secretary of State for the Colonies on the 11 September 1886. 'Queensland', *Times*, 11 September 1886; Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 106; Joseph Ahearne, 'North Queensland Separation Movement', Letter to the Editor, *Times*, 23 June 1886.

<sup>180</sup> These principal grounds were comparable to the ones advanced by the Moreton Bay District in their 1850s 'fight' to gain independence from New South Wales. Reference to the earlier and successful separation agitation was frequent and illustrative comparisons were routinely made. In particular between Moreton Bay's population and economic position at separation and the North's current position to demonstrate that the North was in far stronger position than Moreton Bay when it was granted self-government. The strategy adopted by the North Queensland Separation League also rested on this earlier separatist cause and Thankfull Willmetts' interpretation of Imperial legislation. In essence it was believed that the power to create a new colony upon petition of the inhabitants of any territory rested exclusively with the Crown. Moreover, as Willmetts informed Governor Musgrave, 'the interference with or approval of the colonial legislatures' was not required. *Ibid*; Willmetts to Musgrave, 16 November 1886, *QVP*, 1 (1886): 433.

<sup>181</sup> The similarities between the Moreton Bay separation agitation in the 1850s and the North's case are numerous and beyond the obvious parallels in the basic reasons advanced for territorial separation it is interesting to note that the South employed an argument against Northern separation which had greatly offended them in the course of their campaign; that the North was incapable of governing itself. William Brookes the Member for North Brisbane declared in 1884 that 'the North had not the materials out of which they could be separated. They had neither the money nor brains.' William Brookes, *QPD*, 43 (1884): 278 cited in Doran, 'North Queensland Separatism the Nineteenth Century': 212.

to weaken the South's avowed opposition to the movement. The petition did however demonstrate the North's 'wonderful' unanimity on separation and the issue was now rated as 'the most important matter in the North' but it did not remove 'the black labour question from the distracting position it has so prominently held in the discussions on North Queensland'.<sup>182</sup>

The League's repeated assurances that coloured labour was not the basis of the movement had succeeded in only converting a number of northern anti-separatists who had held strong reservations over the true motivation of the cause.<sup>183</sup> The principal centre of northern opposition was the mining-based town of Charters Towers. In April 1885, Charters Towers had initiated the formation of Anti-Separation Leagues in the North yet by November the League was in decline. The *Northern Miner*, owned by Thaddeus O'Kane, a key protagonist in the formation of the Anti-Separation committee outlined the basic reasoning for the altered stance:

The apprehension of a Coolie invasion and of Northern Queensland being turned into a slave state has, since then, caused us to oppose the movement for Separation: but that apprehension has been removed, in a great degree, by the declarations of the Townsville...Separation League.<sup>184</sup>

The League's repudiations had been ineffective in the South. Three interconnected components contributed to this. First, the authoritative influence of Griffith who 'had entered into a sort of war against the whole question' of separation.<sup>185</sup> Second, the South was and remained the most fervent opponents to any form of cheap imported coloured labour. Third and most notably Griffith's

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<sup>182</sup> John Macrossan cited in 'Separation of Northern Queensland', 20 August 1886, *QPD*, 44 (1886): 441; Mr. Dean cited in 'Sir Thomas McLwraith in the North', *Queenslander*, 23 January 1886.

<sup>183</sup> An additional basis of opposition in the North was based on party politics. Liberals feared that the separatist action was political ploy to discredit and destabilise the Liberal government.

<sup>184</sup> Growing dissatisfaction with the Liberal government also aided this altered stance in particular the financial difficulties created from the Land Act and the resulting introduction of *ad valorem* duty on imported machinery. *Northern Miner*, 20 November 1885.

<sup>185</sup> Arthur Palmer cited in 'Separation of Northern Queensland', 27 August 1886, *QPD*, 44 (1886): 535.

provocative amalgamation of the separatist cause with the issue of coloured labour had occurred when public sensibilities were being outraged by the much publicised detailing of the 'revolting cruelties of the Queensland labour traffic.'<sup>186</sup> In this context, the implied threat that 'the planters of Queensland desire the creation of "a slave state in Northern Queensland"' was a particularly confrontational and frightening proposition that had significant reverberating effects.<sup>187</sup> In the midst of this developing and heated internal dispute Griffith and the Colonial Treasurer James Dickson left the colony to attend the first Federal Council meeting in Hobart in January 1886.

The significance of the inaugural sitting of the Federal Council was eulogised by the Queensland press 'as an earnest of the coming Australian nationality' for the Council was canvassed as 'the body around which as a nucleus federated Australia will ultimately crystallise'.<sup>188</sup> The 'confidence' and 'interest' espoused in the *Brisbane Courier's* editorial was not however reproduced in the generally bland factual reports of each day's proceedings, nor did it translate into any real display of public interest.<sup>189</sup> Though the Federal Council meeting was heralded as 'undoubtedly an event of great interest' it did not supplant, in the Queensland arena, the more immediate local focus on separation, economic and climatic

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<sup>186</sup> Governor Musgrave to Sir Henry Holland, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 October 1887, 'Letterbooks of Confidential Despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Volume 1. 29 January 1868 - 7 June 1892', .

<sup>187</sup> Craig, 'The Sugar Industry': 54.

<sup>188</sup> 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 27 January 1886.

<sup>189</sup> In fairness to the *Brisbane Courier's* 'Special Correspondent' in Hobart his reports on the deliberations of Federal Council had to be telegraphed in and this in part explains the succinctness of the coverage. It was noted that the Hobart paper the *Mercury* had reflected the 'importance of the Federal Council' in producing 'a fifteen and a half column report' of one day's proceedings. In the *Courier* each day was accorded a third to a half a column. *Ibid*; 'The Federal Council', *Brisbane Courier*, 27, 30 January, 12, February, 1886.



matters.<sup>190</sup> The primacy of these local issues to the Queensland mind was depicted in George Craig's caution to Griffith:

There is a time when statesmen, like redoubtable warriors, must lift the visor in the midst of carnage to see if their forces have not advanced too far into the fray, to prevent their being outflanked. Such noble charges made by the heroic Premier into the fights of Federation...and New Guinea Question, command the warmest admiration, but though having thus far marched into the bowels of the questions without much impediment, he must look around and not neglect the internal affairs of the colony.<sup>191</sup>

In evidence was the inherent tension in Queensland between provincialism and federalism.

This factor, not always so explicitly declared, was a persistent and influential feature of Queensland's involvement in the federation movement.<sup>192</sup> Local matters, as a fundamental rule, were expected to be the focal point of each Government, and within this dynamic federation was an acceptable distraction if local concerns were accorded priority. Contentment with the current system of colonial governance was the underpinning of the general indifference shown towards the federal objective. 'An Australian' in a letter to the Editor of the *Times*, explained:

Australians appreciate the advantages that federation would bring them, but the rival jealousies as much as the respective interests of the colonies make them disinclined to sanction any change in their constitutions....they are convinced that the constitutions that has suited them so long will continue to benefit them still.<sup>193</sup>

An intriguing aspect to Griffith's involvement at the Federal Council's inaugural meeting was his tabling, in this new national forum, of a prominent local Queensland dispute. Griffith laid before the Council 'certain correspondence' on

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<sup>190</sup> In regional areas of Queensland the coverage of and comment on the Federal Council was even more abbreviated. Refer to *Northern Miner* and *Mackay Mercury*, 30 January, 10 February 1886. Service cited in 'The Federal Council', *Brisbane Courier*, 27 January 1886.

<sup>191</sup> Craig, 'The Griffith Policy,' 197-207.

<sup>192</sup> Indifference to federation was the most common response to the intersection of colonialism and federalism.

<sup>193</sup> 'An Australian', 'Australian Federation. To the Editor of the *Times*', *Times*, 7 November 1884.

the 'Proposed Separation of Northern Queensland.'<sup>194</sup> His reasoning for this action was that he believed:

that the matter was of general Australasian interest. Several important questions are involved in the proposed separation – amongst them, the [coloured] labour question, which affects Queensland especially, but it also affects in a minor degree some of the other colonies. That it is a question upon which it is desirable that there should be a general expression of public opinion throughout Australasia.<sup>195</sup>

The Council initiated no debate on the matter, the motion was simply seconded by Dickson, put and passed. Furthermore, Griffith's tabling of the Separation question received no press coverage. This brief incident however is particularly noteworthy for three reasons. First, it represents the initial intersection between the two movements of Northern separation and federation, one that was variously maintained throughout the late 1880s and 1890s. At the 1888 Federal Council meeting Dickson tabled further correspondence on the separatist issue. He explained that his objective was to ensure that the Federal Council records contained 'as closely as possible the history of any political or social movement in the colonies of Australasia.'<sup>196</sup> Separation was therefore distinguished as a significant colonial movement. The second feature of interest was Griffith's unrelenting and evocative alignment of coloured labour with North Queensland's separatist demands. This disputed but effective proposition had engendered strong internal and external opposition to the separatist cause. The intrinsic threat was that 'a colony of caste' would be established in North Queensland, one antagonistic to the homogenous development of a white Australia.<sup>197</sup> The third and interconnected feature was that Griffith had put forward the issue of Queensland's

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<sup>194</sup> Griffith, 'Tuesday, February 2, 1886', *Federal Council of Australasia. Session 1886.*: 74-75.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> Dickson, 'Proposed Separation of Northern Queensland', *Federal Council of Australasia. Second Session, 1888. Official Record of Debates.* Hobart: Printed at *The Mercury* and *Tasmanian Mail* Offices, 1888: 36.

<sup>197</sup> Alcazar Press, *Queensland 1900: A Narrative of Her Past Together With Biographies of Her Leading Men.* 155.

employment of coloured labour as a question that had national (Australian) implications and one which required mutual consideration. In the context of an intensifying ethnocentric campaign for a white Australia, it is feasible to argue that Griffith had advanced the local Queensland issue of separation to assist the federal cause by promoting a practical racial dilemma suitable for and requisite of combined federal action. While it is apparent that the Council did not openly appreciate the purpose of Griffith's action, as no debate was initiated, the rudimentary components of the racial argument entwined in the separatist cause would acquire greater coherence and develop into a significant rallying force for federation.

What is perplexing about Griffith raising the coloured labour issue in this forum at this time was that he had, prior to the Federal Council meeting, submitted and passed local legislation that had set the timeframe for the abolition of this problematic form of labour in Queensland. Coloured labour in Queensland was technically a receding issue and Griffith's Government had been praised for 'their firmness in clearing the colony of this curse of coloured labour.'<sup>198</sup> Arguably Griffith's underlying intent was to malign the northern case for separation and harness broader opposition. The attainment of Northern separation would, to Griffith's mind, unquestionably lead to coloured labour being re-introduced into the new colony, a state of affairs hazardous for the federal movement. Indirectly, Griffith's unusual action had indicated the force of the separatist movement and the significant political and social bearing that the two distinctive though entangled

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<sup>198</sup> 'Editorial', Northern Miner, 2 June 1885.

issues of coloured labour and Northern separatism had on the domestic affairs of Queensland and ultimately on the other colonies.

Maurice Black, the Member for Mackay acknowledged that Griffith in raising the 'coolie cry, has adopted the best means...to checkmate this movement.'<sup>199</sup> The alignment of coloured labour with separation did effectively tip the balance of non-partisan opinion against separation and brought cohesion to the opponents of coloured labour. Most notably, it outlined the prospective development of a disquieting state of affairs that had broader national (Australian) implications. Racial ideas were at this time acquiring a new significance in all the colonies and what was evident was a more coherent articulation of racial difference and its impact on national progress. The 'grave political and social question' entailed in the North's demand for separation, Griffith repeatedly claimed, was that the proposed introduction of coloured labour would preclude the new colony from being 'governed on the model adopted by the rest of the Australian Colonies.'<sup>200</sup> The overarching threat imposed by the prospect of this 'colony of caste' in Northern Queensland was that it would institute a condition of social and political affairs radically different to the other colonies and therefore detrimental to the broader development of federation. More specifically, it was argued that the anticipated social and political dynamics of this new colony would be hostile to the development in the other colonies of free and centralised democratic institutions. Second, its racial basis would retard the development of a homogenous national Australian sentiment. It was therefore argued that 'there could be no real federation of such a colony of caste, with the vigorous democracies of the

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<sup>199</sup> M.H. Black cited in 'Separation of Northern Queensland', 27 August 1886, *QPD*, 44 (1886): 539.

South.<sup>201</sup> The *Brisbane Courier's* editorial on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1886 thus considered the broader influence of this local contention:

The importance of the separation movement is determined rather by its bearing on the future of Australia than merely on the convenience of this particular colony....One point to which we think separationists...should address themselves, is the effect that the separation of tropical Queensland is likely to have on the future dominion of Australia...we do not refer to the possibility of slavery, or any nonsense of that sort talked by people who ought to know better; but to the obvious effect of labour and employer being separated by the broad bar of colour and race. Northern aristocracy – a race aristocracy, will confront the Australian white democracy...we may leave to our children such a legacy of evil as that from which America has only rid herself by the most terrible fratricidal war which modern world has seen.<sup>202</sup>

A significant galvanising force in the development of this focus on the social and political impact of coloured labour was the increasing activism of the 'working men of Queensland'.<sup>203</sup> The prominence of racial factors in the burgeoning labour movement's platform was such that the President of the Northern Separation Council, Thankfull Willmetts argued that 'their powerful influence' was the main reason why Griffith 'studiously ignores our repeated assurances on the question of coloured labour'.<sup>204</sup> The basis of the alliance between Liberal and labour was an enduring point of debate, yet arguably at this time there was little difference between the social and economic agendas of the two groupings, and their political alignment was fundamentally one of mutual reliance. Griffith's opponents however considered that the form and pace of his progressive labour reforms were not the product of Liberal ideology but that 'of white labourers thinking...being brought to imagine by artful stump orators'.<sup>205</sup> Reservations were consequently held over

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<sup>200</sup> Griffith to Governor Musgrave, 1 April 1885, 'Proposed Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 5-9.

<sup>201</sup> Alcazar Press, *Queensland 1900*: 155.

<sup>202</sup> 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 21 August 1886.

<sup>203</sup> Rose, 'The Hon. Samuel Walker Griffith': 84.

<sup>204</sup> T. Willmetts to Governor Musgrave, 26 April 1887, 'Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland', *Federal Council of Australasia. Second Session, 1888*: 25-27.

<sup>205</sup> T.L. Murray-prior cited in 'Indian Immigration Acts Repeal Bill', 5 February 1884, *QPD*, 41 (1884): 47.

whether Griffith's opposition to coloured labour was one of principle or simply political expediency:

But the fact is the Ministry find the labour question a red rag to dangle before the working men of the colony, jealous encroachment upon their just industrial rights by an alien race, jealous of the power of capital clashing with labour, and jealous of the influence of plutocracy over democracy. So long as Mr. Griffith continues to please such a jealous political temperament, so long will he probably remain in power.<sup>206</sup>

Certainly the heightened sensitivity to the presence of racial minorities engendered in Queensland in the early 1880s did contribute to Griffith's political success. Yet, concurrently it proved to be a catalyst for the further organisation of labour, which ultimately resulted in the fracturing of the alliance.<sup>207</sup> Albert Hinchcliffe, a leading contemporary labour advocate remarked of this period that 'to circumstances we owe everything, and circumstances have been singularly favourable in the Banana Land to the organisation of labour...."No Kanaka labour" has thus been a watchword'.<sup>208</sup> The process by which white labour in Queensland emerged as a significant pressure group was favourably provided for by the legislative and social circumstances engendered by Griffith's Liberal administration. Aside from the reforms introduced to address the coloured labour question, Griffith's additional legislative initiatives did demonstrate his accord with and desire to retain the support of the labouring classes. The political organisation of white labour was a notable derivative of these initiatives.

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<sup>206</sup> Craig, 'The Sugar Industry': 56.

<sup>207</sup> Indicative of the pervasiveness of the race issue amongst the working class was the contemporary comment that 'the weather and black labour is more discussed at the hotel bar than in the office or parlour, or club.' 'Anon.' 'The Lounger at the Clubs,' *Queensland Review*, 1: 2 (September 1885): 167-71.

<sup>208</sup> Albert Hinchcliffe was Secretary of the Brisbane Trades and Labour Council; a typesetter for William Lane's labour newspaper *Boomerang*, and in 1888 was endorsed as a Labour candidate for the seat of Toombul. In 1890 Hinchcliffe with William Lane established the Australian Labour Federation newspaper the *Worker*. Albert Hinchcliffe, 'The Labour Party in Queensland,' *Centennial Magazine*, 2: 11 (June 1890): 865-68; W.J. Harris, *First Steps: Queensland Worker's Moves Towards Political Expression 1857-1893*. Canberra: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1966: 10-11.

In September 1885, the Trades and Labour Council was established in Brisbane by ten unions. In September 1886 the Council sought from Griffith's Liberal Government their legal recognition. Griffith's response was the *Trade Union Act*, which established unions as legal organisations.<sup>209</sup> The extension of unionism throughout Queensland was a consequent result and between 1887 and 1888 the number of registered unions in the colony doubled from sixteen to thirty-two.<sup>210</sup> Another initiative sought by the Trades and Labour Council was acceded to in November 1886 with the passage of the *Employers Liability Act*. This Act extended the legal responsibility of employer's for personal injuries suffered by employees in defined occupations, in essence it introduced a form of workers compensation.<sup>211</sup> Two further acts the 1886 *Member's Expenses Act* and the 1887 *Electoral Districts Act* though not specifically framed for the labour sector did assist the organisation or more specifically the politicisation of labour. The payment of Members of Parliaments expenses up to £200 per year was an essential precondition for the participation of working class candidates.<sup>212</sup> Second, the 1887 increase in the number of representatives for the Legislative Assembly to seventy-two was an additional aid for the working class cause.<sup>213</sup> The basis of the redistribution of seats was population and this therefore favoured the urban centres and associatively the largely urban-based nascent labour movement. The 1887

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<sup>209</sup> Prior to this Act the law offered no protection for union funds and second and most notably, unions were liable to prosecution for criminal conspiracy if and when they went on strike. D.J. Murphy, 'Trade Unions', D.J. Murphy, (ed.), *The Big Strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983: 33-44; Gordon Greenwood, *Australia: A Social and Political history*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1969: 155.

<sup>210</sup> Jacqueline McCormack, 'The Politics of Expediency: Queensland Government in the Eighteen Nineties', Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Queensland, 1974: 228.

<sup>211</sup> While a notable advance the act was restrictive its application. Compensation was limited to a maximum of three years wages and the claimant was required to prove that the injury or death was directly attributable to negligence of the employer. Few claims were consequently successful. Harris, *First Steps*: 10; Stuart Svensen, *The Shearers' War: The Story of the 1891 Shearers' Strike*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989: 32.

<sup>212</sup> Though not specifically labour orientated the question of the payment of members had been an agenda item at the 1886 Intercolonial Trade Union Congress in Adelaide. Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 107; Harris, *First Steps*: 9.

establishment of an official labour political body, the Workers Political Reform Association, was the cumulative effect of these legislative measures. The declared objective of the Workers Political Reform Association was:

To unite the political strength of the various bodies which sympathise with the Labour reform movement, and to initiate such political action as shall secure to the labouring masses that legislative power which by right belongs to them, the majority, but which is at present owing to lack of unity among the workers held by a self interested minority, and used by it in a manner antagonistic to their general welfare.<sup>214</sup>

Four labour candidates were subsequently endorsed for the 1888 General Election, three of which were for Brisbane-based seats.<sup>215</sup> That the labour movement was not yet strongly established was demonstrated in the unsuccessful candidacy of these labour representatives. Yet indicative of the rising political influence of the 'working man' was both Griffith and McIlwraith's endeavours to acquire their political support in the election campaign.

By 1887 Griffith's political position was failing and by September his defeat was being predicted. The 'lamentable state of the Finances of the Colony' was the principal cause of the growing and 'strong feeling' against the Griffith administration.<sup>216</sup> The August 1887 attempt by Griffith to redress the colony's financial situation, through the introduction of a controversial land tax to raise revenue, resulted in an irrevocable reduction in his popular appeal and the disintegration of his Ministerial majority.<sup>217</sup> Parliament was prorogued in early

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<sup>213</sup> In 1878 the number of representative was set at fifty-five. Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 294-295.

<sup>214</sup> 'Editorial', *Boomerang*, 6 November 1887.

<sup>215</sup> W.P. Colbourne to stand for the Valley, J. Johnson for Wooloongabba, Hinchcliffe for Toombul and Glassey for Bundamba. Glassey was only successful candidate and aligned himself with Griffith. Harris, *First Steps*: 10.

<sup>216</sup> George Fox, 'To the Electors of Normanby', *Mackay Mercury*, 24 March 1888.

<sup>217</sup> The Colonial Treasurer James Dickson and the Postmaster General Thomas MacDonald-Patterson resigned from Griffith's Cabinet in protest over Griffith's Land Tax proposal. Governor Musgrave reported in October 1887 that Griffith had 'manifestly lost control over his followers in the Assembly. His administration only exists now on sufferance....he is only allowed to remain in power because his opponents do wish to take



December 1887 and electioneering began in earnest. The proposed land tax in particular and the economic management of the colony more generally emerged not surprisingly as the most prominent issues in the campaign. Griffith endeavoured to ascribe much of the responsibility for the colony's mounting unemployment and deficit to the 'consequences of the most disastrous period of drought that has ever afflicted Australia'.<sup>218</sup> Mcllwraith derisively dismissed this defence and attributed 'the cause of the financial disaster' to the Liberal Government's 'ignorantly extravagant' expenditure of public money, and to the *Crown Lands Act*, which was 'ignorantly destroying one of our best sources of revenue'.<sup>219</sup> In the volleying of claim and counter claim a convincing manoeuvre by Mcllwraith and his supporters, was the promotion of Mcllwraith as the 'great statesman who is to wrest Queensland from beggary'.<sup>220</sup> Mcllwraith's 1879-1883 premiership had demonstrated his 'masterful grasp of the process of material advancement' and in the context of Queensland's worsening economic position these qualities were again revered.<sup>221</sup> Mcllwraith and his new National party were returned to office with a significant majority of 44 seats to the Liberals 25, with 3 Independents. The 'unsuccessful financial management of Griffith's government' was a significant determinant in the result yet it cannot be viewed in isolation from the perennial and dynamic issues of separation, coloured labour and the labour movement.<sup>222</sup>

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office before a general election'. Our Brisbane Letter', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 December 1884; Musgrave to Sir Henry Holland, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 October 1887, 'Letterbooks of Confidential Despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Volume 1. 29 January 1868 - 7 June 1892', 214-19.

<sup>218</sup> Samuel Griffith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Brisbane Courier*, 3 March 1888.

<sup>219</sup> Thomas Mcllwraith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Brisbane Courier*, 14 March 1888.

<sup>220</sup> The new weekly Brisbane publication the *Boomerang* encouraged Mcllwraith, whom it credited as possessing an unusual degree of 'financial dexterity and administrative firmness' and to 'hammer away on that string.' 'Editorial', *Mackay Mercury*, 20 March 1888; 'Bystanders Note-book', *Boomerang*, 10 December 1887.

<sup>221</sup> Traill, *Historical Sketch of Queensland. Facsimile Edition.*: 61.

<sup>222</sup> Musgrave to Sir Henry Holland, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 October 1887, 'Letterbooks of Confidential Despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Volume 1. 29 January 1868 - 7 June 1892', 214-19.

Despite the disappointment of the Imperial Government's June 1887 rejection of North Queensland's 'monster' petition for territorial separation, the movement itself, as Governor Musgrave reported had 'not by any means ceased.'<sup>223</sup> The basis for the refusal was Sir Henry Holland's, the Secretary of State for the Colonies conclusion that the North had not presented 'a sufficiently strong case' to justify the introduction of special Imperial legislation.<sup>224</sup> The overarching concern for the Imperial authorities was the problematic precedent that Imperial action would set. The Secretary of State explained in his June 1887 despatch that:

Imperial legislation, not supported by resolutions or legislation of the Colonial Parliament, for the purpose of taking away a portion of the territory formally placed under the control of the local legislature by the Constitutions Acts, would be a very serious interference with that responsible government under which the settlement of the colony has been developed.<sup>225</sup>

Recognition of this right of self-government and the Imperial Government's consequent reluctance to intervene in the domestic affairs of the colony without the consent of parliament would prove to be the permanent impediment to all demands for territorial separation. Yet, at this point in time there was some solace for the separatist cause in the June despatch as the idea of Imperial intervention was not totally dismissed. Sir Henry Holland conditionally acknowledged that Imperial action 'would be only justifiable if, after a prolonged trial, all other means of removing any administrative defects or inequalities should prove ineffective'.<sup>226</sup> To fulfil this condition the north and the southern-based government of

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<sup>223</sup> Sir Henry Holland to Governor Musgrave, 14 June 1887, 'Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland', *Federal Council of Australasia. Second Session, 1888*: 31; Musgrave to Sir Henry Holland, 20 October 1887, *Ibid*,

<sup>224</sup> Sir Henry Holland to Governor Musgrave, 14 June 1887, 'Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland', *Federal Council of Australasia. Second Session, 1888*: 31.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*.

Queensland were instructed to institute and 'test fairly' Griffith's proposed decentralisation scheme.<sup>227</sup>

Griffith's plan 'to remove, as far as practicable, the evils of undue centralisation in the administration of the Government' consisted of three bills, which were introduced into parliament in August 1887.<sup>228</sup> The Financial Districts Bill would divide the colony into three districts for financial purposes with each division allocated a separate account for revenue and expenditure; the Local Administration Bill provided for the establishment of branches of government departments in the central and northern districts with the authority to conduct the ordinary executive functions of the Government; and the Real Property (Local Registries) Bill would establish branches of the Registrar of Titles Office in Townsville and Rockhampton.<sup>229</sup> Griffith immediately encountered opposition to his plan from the south, and from the north. James Garrick, Queensland's Agent General in London encapsulated the basis of this dual opposition, 'Your plan is almost more than the South will be disposed to give, while it is less than the North will take.'<sup>230</sup> Despite significant resistance from within Griffith's own Cabinet and the opposition of several southern members the trio of legislation did pass the second reading phase. With a general election pending, the extent of southern opposition, revealed in the narrowness of the vote on the Financial Districts and

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<sup>227</sup> As part of Griffith's January 1887 official response to the 'Petition for the separation the northern portion of the colony' he informed Sir Henry Holland of his intention to introduce decentralisation measures to address the separatists' grievances. *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> Griffith to the Governor Musgrave, 19 January 1887, 'Separation of the Northern Portion of Queensland', *Federal Council of Australasia. Second Session, 1888*: 11.

<sup>229</sup> The Real Property Bill was the only one of the three that became law in 1887. The Northern members accepted this bill as a practical reform as it effect a significant reduction in the time and expense involved in sending every mortgage and transfer of property to the Brisbane office for registration. *Ibid.*: 12-13; Doran, 'North Queensland Separatism the Nineteenth Century': 286-290.

<sup>230</sup> James Garrick to Griffith, 2 October 1887, 'Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1887-1891. MSQ 187',

the Local Administration Bills, was for Griffith, a matter of concern.<sup>231</sup> In an attempt to restore party unity Griffith abandoned the two bills.

The divisiveness of the separatist issue proved to be a strategic dilemma for both Griffith and McIlwraith in their election campaigns. Both leaders were contesting the seat of North Brisbane and thus their election notices were addressed to this southern-based electorate. The inherent problem in this was that their election manifestos were also regarded as the formal statement of each party's policies to attain government. The challenge therefore was not to be at variance with the views of their southern constituents while at the same time presenting an opinion that did not alienate the North. Both consequently were portrayed as only 'touching on' the separatist issue.<sup>232</sup> Griffith outlined his qualified intention to renew his decentralisation plan 'with such modifications as may be desirable.'<sup>233</sup> McIlwraith alternatively contradicted his previous, though conditional, support of the separatist cause and put forward, for the first time, the dictum 'Federation before Separation', which was to be utilised as a powerful slogan by the movement's opponents:

The Separation of North from South Queensland is to many a vital question. I have not been opposed to Separation, but I think no separation should take place until the Colonies are federated. We exercise an influence on that question as a United Queensland, which I am afraid we should lose were we divided, and it will be true policy to subordinate the lesser question to the greater.<sup>234</sup>

Separation as an election topic was in the south essentially a non-issue.

Alternatively in the north where separation was the 'most important subject' a

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<sup>231</sup> The vote on the Financial Districts Bill, the most problematical for the south as it was perceived as the first step towards an undesirable separation that would negatively affect southern interests, was 25 to 21. 'Financial Districts Bill –Second Reading', *QPD*, 52 (1887): 496.

<sup>232</sup> 'Editorial', *Mackay Mercury*, 15 March 1888.

<sup>233</sup> Samuel Griffith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Brisbane Courier*, 3 March 1888.

<sup>234</sup> Thomas McIlwraith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Brisbane Courier*, 14 March 1888.

wordy editorial debate unfolded.<sup>235</sup> The debate was however particularly one-sided with the Liberal newspapers endeavouring to draw separatist support away from their traditional political alignment with Mcllwraith's Conservative party. Thus it was argued that while Griffith's scheme was deficient it was more concrete than Mcllwraith's postponement. The Liberal newspaper the *Mackay Mercury* therefore pressed two lines of argument. First, 'That the North can expect no help from Sir Thomas Mcllwraith' and second that 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith is not a Separationist...so his views on other subjects are of comparatively little interest to North Queensland.'<sup>236</sup> Countering these claims John Macrossan,<sup>237</sup> the political leader of the separation movement, defended Mcllwraith's 'vague' electoral statement on Northern separation. Macrossan reaffirmed that 'Sir Thomas believed in Separation but as a Southern statesmen he could not say so.'<sup>238</sup> Regionalism thus featured, as a significant component in the Northern campaign and the effect of the Liberal strategy was discernible in the reduced number of Conservative separatist members returned. Prior to the 1887 redistribution of seats, nine of the ten northern members were separationists, in 1888 eleven of the sixteen candidates elected were in favour of separation.<sup>239</sup> Party politics therefore prevented the establishment of a northern bloc in parliament to press the separatist cause but it was hoped that Macrossan and Black's Cabinet positions in Mcllwraith's new ministry would accrue some benefit for the North.

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<sup>235</sup> 'Editorial', *Mackay Mercury*, 20 March 1888.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid*, 22, 24 March 1888.

<sup>237</sup> John Murtagh Macrossan (1832-1891) Irish immigrant, Miner, Queensland Politician, Northern Separationist and Federalist. First elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1874 as one of the Members for Kennedy. In 1878 election Macrossan was defeated but went onto contest and win the newly vacant seat of Townsville, which continued to represent until his sudden death. In Mcllwraith's first and second Cabinet Macrossan held the important portfolio of Public Works and Mines. Townsville was the headquarters of the separatist cause and Macrossan was the political representative and leader of the cause. Macrossan was convinced of the futility of Griffith's financial measures and strongly advocated succession. Harrison Bryan, 'John Murtagh Macrossan: "Jack the Hatter"', D.J. Murphy and R.B. Joyce, (eds.), *Queensland Political Portraits, 1859-1952*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1978: 93-117.

<sup>238</sup> 'Editorial', *Mackay Mercury*, 24 March 1888.

A peculiar feature of the involvement of the separatist question in the election campaign was McIlwraith's incorporation of the federal topic. Beyond the broad assertion that McIlwraith was in effect postponing separation there was little comment on his prioritisation of federation. Yet, indirectly, the derisive comment of one northern newspaper the *Mackay Mercury* did portray the general perception that federation was still a long time off: 'Sir Thomas threw in...his opinion that we should not have Separation until there is a confederated Australia. Surely this will not be long – a matter of five or twenty years at the outside.'<sup>240</sup> McIlwraith's incorporation of the federal question was an extension of his strong opposition to the Naval Defence agreement brokered by Griffith at the Colonial Conference held in London in 1887. Griffith had committed Queensland to pay an annual subsidy of £15,000 to maintain a British fleet to protect Australia's coastline. In the debate on the Naval Defence Bill, introduced into parliament at the end of the 1887 session, McIlwraith questioned Griffith's 'imperialistic tendencies' and his authority to make this commitment without the sanction of parliament.<sup>241</sup> Second, he criticised Britain for evading its responsibility and throwing undue burden on her colonial possessions. Griffith was 'much embarrassed' by the extent of the hostility engendered by the bill and as it was expected to become a 'bone of contention at the forthcoming election' he abandoned it.<sup>242</sup> A secondary feature of McIlwraith's opposition was the damaging impact that this defence agreement had had on the federal cause:

A heavy blow was dealt to these [federal] hopes by the acceptance of an invitation from the Imperial Government to a conference in London to consider questions which formed the very foundation on which our united

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<sup>239</sup> The division of the northern members was on party lines; the five anti-separationists were Liberals and the eleven separationists McIlwraith supporters. McCormack, 'The Politics of Expediency': 191.

<sup>240</sup> 'Editorial', *Mackay Mercury*, 22 March 1888.

<sup>241</sup> 'Telegraphic Intelligence', *Northern Miner*, 24 April 1888.

<sup>242</sup> Musgrave to Sir Henry Holland, 30 November 1887 cited in Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 146; 'Editorial' *Northern Miner*, 9 March 1888.

Australia was to rest. The result was inevitable. The second session of the Federal Council met, and they had nothing to do. Their *raison d'être* has almost gone, for this Imperial Conference had taken out of their hands the question of federal defence.<sup>243</sup>

Griffith made no direct reference to the Naval Defence Bill in his election statement and on the question of federation he broadly stressed the 'necessity for united action' and his determination to assist 'to bring about this result.'<sup>244</sup> As arguably Queensland's most prominent federalist Griffith's brevity on the topic revealed that federation was not a subject of any real consequence in the election.<sup>245</sup>

In stark contrast to the 1883 election the issue of Queensland's importation of coloured labour did not in 1888 generate extensive or spirited debate. Griffith's legislative reforms of the Pacific Island labour trade had ostensibly settled the issue internally and had, as he claimed, 'effectually retrieved the character of Queensland in the eyes of the world.'<sup>246</sup> Alternative opinions challenged the redeeming qualities associated with Griffith's termination of the labour trade. The London *Times* portrayed Britain's inherent suspiciousness of Queensland in its comment on the Pacific Island Labour Amendment bill: 'The people of England had a strongly rooted feeling that Queensland was emphatically a slave country'.<sup>247</sup> Governor Musgrave was of the same mind and remained sceptical of the colony's socio-political reform. In a series of confidential despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Musgrave presented his opinion on the Queensland situation as it related to the future administration of New Guinea.

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<sup>243</sup> Thomas McIlwraith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Brisbane Courier*, 14 March 1888.

<sup>244</sup> Samuel Griffith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Brisbane Courier*, 3 March 1888.

<sup>245</sup> The *Boomerang* concisely queried McIlwraith's raising of the federal topic and asked 'Now we want to know where the federal spirit comes in.' 'Leader of the Week', *Boomerang*, 17 March 1888.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> 'Northern Mail News', *Mackay Mercury*, 24 October 1885.

Musgrave's 'great objections' to Queensland assuming administrative control was that it would subject New Guinea:

to the Council of a comparatively uneducated community which has shown itself notably regardless of the commonest rights of humanity in respect of the black native tribes within its own territory – to say nothing of what has been disclosed of the Kanaka labour trade. Nothing in the history of the Slave trade or of slavery in the West Indies is more shocking than occurrences which have taken place in Queensland....It is not that the community is without men of humane and philanthropic minds; but that even if such as these should be in the temporary possession of administrative power the moral tone on these matters of the mass of the people is low and no Ministry ventures to do that which is unpopular with any large section of political supporters....It does not lead me to believe that H.M. Government would be justified in confiding the future fortunes of the people of New Guinea to the protection of the public opinion of Queensland.<sup>248</sup>

'The course of recent events', Musgrave argued in late October 1887 had 'only strengthened the views expressed' in his previous despatches.<sup>249</sup> The growing political instability in Queensland was the underlying basis of Musgrave's concern. Thus while he believed that Griffith was 'more actuated by principle than most of his contemporaries. He may from motives of expediency submit to have his hand forced.'<sup>250</sup> The increasing likelihood of a change in administration presented for Musgrave the most alarming prospect that of the 'return to power of those who originally forced the annexation of New Guinea'.<sup>251</sup> To counter the lingering and negative association between his action in New Guinea and the recruitment of Pacific Islanders, McIlwraith pledged not to reverse Griffith's legislation, which terminated the recruitment of labour in the Pacific. Second, he declared that he was now against the introduction of 'Coolie' labour and furthermore guaranteed

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<sup>248</sup> Musgrave to Sir Henry Holland, 11 March 1886, 'Letterbooks of Confidential Despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Volume 1. 29 January 1868 - 7 June 1892', QSA: 196-200.

<sup>249</sup> Musgrave to Sir Henry Holland, 20 October 1887, *Ibid*: 214-219.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>251</sup> Musgrave to Sir Henry Holland, 11 March 1886, 20 October 1887, *Ibid*: 191, 217.



that he would not re-opened negotiations with the Indian government.<sup>252</sup> Griffith was 'unable to believe in the genuineness of their [the Conservatives] conversion' yet McIlwraith's 'frank and explicit' statements on the issues were effective.<sup>253</sup> Alert to the increasing weight of public opinion, engendered by the escalating social/racial debate, McIlwraith had modified his pure economic focus. Whether a deliberate political stratagem or a true revision of his principles McIlwraith's 1888 election statements effectively evaded the 1883 criticism that his policies lacked social foresight.<sup>254</sup> More particularly it defused the potential contentiousness of the coloured labour question, which had in 1883 given 'Sir Samuel all he is worth – an absolute dictatorship of Queensland'.<sup>255</sup> An acknowledged force in extracting such a policy shift was the increasingly influence of the organised pressure group of white labour.

In 1888, Aleck Ivimey cynically depicted the growing influence of labour: 'In Queensland, where the working man is the shrine that both political parties affect to adore, some little consideration to his susceptibilities, even only for policy's

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<sup>252</sup> Harrison Bryan remarked in his biographical article on Macrossan that Black and Macrossan had agreed, on McIlwraith's request, not to prominently raise the separation issue in the election campaign. One reason to downplay the separatist issue was its volatile connection with the question of coloured labour. Thus it would seem that McIlwraith's vague coverage of separation was a strategic move not to inflame the coloured labour issue which had it was repeatedly noted brought Griffith to power in 1883. Thomas McIlwraith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Brisbane Courier*, 14 March 1888; Bryan, 'John Murtagh Macrossan: "Jack the Hatter"': 115.

<sup>253</sup> Griffith 'the wily tactician' endeavoured to again tap into community's fears over coloured labour. Coloured labour he argued was the first and most important question confronting the colony 'on which depends our very existence as a free people'. McIlwraith he argued 'if the opportunity offered, would act upon the principle which they have always consistently followed, and let the future take care of itself...is this apprehension not supported by the fact...that a recent distinguished visitor has been proclaiming in England, as a settled and admitted fact that North of Australia must in the future belong to the coloured races? I believe on the contrary, that all of Australia will be needed by the white races.' Samuel Griffith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Brisbane Courier*, 3 March 1888; 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 14 March 1888; 'Black Labour', *Mackay Mercury*, 3 April 1888.

<sup>254</sup> McIlwraith's October 1886 assertion that 'At the present time it was unpopular to advocate black labour, because the working classes were deceived on the subject' indicates that his 1888 pronouncements were reflective of a more pragmatic appreciation of the sensitive nature of the coloured labour issue to the labour voters in particular than a principled shift in his position. McIlwraith cited in 'Pacific Island Labourer Amendment Bill', 20 October 1886, *QPD*, 47 (1886): 1144.

<sup>255</sup> Ivimey, *Mining and Separation in North Queensland*: 217.

sake, might be expected to be made.<sup>256</sup> Both political leaders, as evidenced in their election manifestoes, clearly recognised the importance of the labour vote in the election and accordingly openly bid for their support. Griffith's election statement made a direct reference to the underlying basis of labour's problems:

The relation between labour and capital constitute one of the great difficulties of the day. I look to the recognition of this principle that *a share of the profits of productive labour belongs of right to the labourer* as of the greatest importance in the future adjustment of those relations....I entertain a strong hope that before long this principle will form part of the positive law of Queensland.<sup>257</sup>

Griffith's pro-labour statements were at this time genuine and increasingly based in ideology. In December 1888, after reading Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*, Griffith expanded his election statements in an article entitled 'Wealth and Want'.<sup>258</sup> In this paper he attacked capitalism as the source of 'sweating' and argued that one of the government's principal functions was 'to protect the weak against the strong, to secure to every man real freedom'.<sup>259</sup> The advancement of aspects of socialist philosophy by Griffith did correspond with the increasing interest of labour leaders in British socialism. Yet in early 1888 the electoral appeal of his pronouncements was diminished by more pragmatic concerns. Under the impact of an economic recession or more particularly the onset of widespread unemployment and the reduction in the real wages and living standards of the working class the Liberal/labour alliance had begun to dissolve. The Trades and Labour Council, to address the developing social and economic concerns of the workers, had expanded the principle of co-operative action through unionism and sought political action to obtain the better representation of the workingman. Increasingly

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<sup>256</sup> *Ibid*: 50.

<sup>257</sup> Samuel Griffith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Brisbane Courier*, 3 March 1888.

<sup>258</sup> Griffith's article was published in the Christmas edition of the *Boomerang*, 23 December 1888.

<sup>259</sup> Griffith's diaries record that he had read *Das Kapital* before writing the article. Quote cited in Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith*: 150.

problematic for the Liberal partners of the alliance were the more radical policies entailed in the labour platform: the legalisation of the eight-hour day, government funded provision for the unemployed and the need for significant electoral reform, in particular one-man one-vote.<sup>260</sup> Splintering the association further was Griffith's treatment of the Chinese question.

At the time of the 1888 general election Queensland, as with the other colonies, was in the midst of an intense burst of anti-Chinese activity.<sup>261</sup> By early 1888, Anti-Chinese Leagues had been formed throughout the colony and matters were further agitated by the worsening economic situation and by a vitriolic press campaign of 'blanket racism'.<sup>262</sup> The most extreme exponent of this persuasive form of writing was that by William Lane,<sup>263</sup> the unofficial leader of the anti-Chinese cause and the principal writer for the *Boomerang*. Lane's overarching premise was that there was 'a true racial struggle...going on...in Australia and Australia is the prize....These clannish and unchangeable coolies and Chinamen will surely clean the white man from the far South – if we let them.'<sup>264</sup> Lane skilfully and fervently presented his argument through a variety of literary devices; as editorials, as emotively charged exposes on Chinese shops, gambling halls and

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<sup>260</sup> Robin Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia 1850-1910*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967: 86; Harris, *First Steps*: 10.

<sup>261</sup> The historian Graeme Davidson has characterized this period of anti-Chinese demonstrations 'as the most concentrated attack of xenophobia in Australia's colonial history.' In June 1888 an Intercolonial Conference was convened to specifically to address the Chinese problem and in a surprising show of unanimity each of the colony's agreed to introduce a uniform and restrictive bill to altogether prevent Chinese Immigration. Cited in Raymond Evans, 'Anti-Chinese Riot, 1888: Lower Albert Street', Raymond Evans and Carole Ferrier, (eds.), *Radical Brisbane: An Unruly History*. Carlton North: Vulgar Press, 2004: 66-70.

<sup>262</sup> Verity Burgmann, 'Capital and Labour', Ann Curthoys and Andrew Markus, (eds.), *Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Australian Working Class*. Sydney: Hale and Ironmonger in association with The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1978: 20-34.

<sup>263</sup> William Lane (1861-19 ) British born American trained journalist, socialist thinker. Lane has been described as 'the most influential polemical journalist in our history' with his ideas and writings unconsciously haunting the minds of Queenslanders long after they had forgotten his name.' Kay Saunders and Katie McConnel, 'The Question of the Day': The Maintenance of Racial Rhetoric in Queensland, Australia: William Lane and Pauline Hanson as Racial Ideologues,' *Immigrants and Minorities*, 19: 3 (November 2000): 45-66.

<sup>264</sup> Stuart G. Svensen, 'William Lane - The Brisbane Years 1885-1892', Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1983: 38; 'Australia for the Australians', *Boomerang*, 21 April 1888.

opium parlours and through a serialised dystopian novel entitled 'White or Yellow? A Story of the Race War of AD 1908'.<sup>265</sup> All of which fuelled an already volatile environment. In early May 1888 this largely rhetoric based 'Anti-Chinese storm' broke into 'the most violent episode' of the 1888 racial crisis.<sup>266</sup> The vehemence and the 'lawlessness' of the 2000 strong mob in Brisbane, which proceeded almost uninterrupted by police was widely reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Melbourne *Argus* and the London *Times*. Not surprisingly, in this charged social atmosphere the question of Chinese immigration had featured prominently in the election campaign.

Though both leaders had advanced an avowedly anti-Chinese line there was to the voting public a discernible difference in the force of each's case. McIlwraith had adopted the succinct and aggressive line of 'total exclusion'.<sup>267</sup> Griffith, in contrast, put forward a series of proposals to address the Chinese problem. The principal action was to increase the entrance tax for the Chinese to a 'practically prohibitive' rate.<sup>268</sup> The straightforwardness of McIlwraith's plan appealed to the majority, for his policy as the *Queensland Figaro* commented did not 'beat about the bush....[and] can be understood by all. It is – total and immediate exclusion of Chinese.'<sup>269</sup> Griffith alternatively was criticised for it was believed that he evinced only a 'dim perception of the necessity of drastic treatment of the Chinese nuisance'.<sup>270</sup> At the core of this anti-Chinese sentiment, as with the entwined coloured labour/separation question, was the strongly held belief that the

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<sup>265</sup> 'White or Yellow? A Story of the Race War of AD 1908' was serialized in the *Boomerang* over twelve weeks between 18 February – 5 May 1888.

<sup>266</sup> Quote cited in Raymond Evans, 'Night of the Broken Glass: The Anatomy of an Anti-Chinese Riot,' *Brisbane in 1888: The Historical Perspective*, Brisbane History Group Papers No.8 (1988): 47-59.

<sup>267</sup> Thomas McIlwraith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Brisbane Courier*, 14 March 1888.

<sup>268</sup> Samuel Griffith, 'To the Electors of North Brisbane', *Brisbane Courier*, 3 March 1888.

<sup>269</sup> 'Editorial', *Queensland Figaro*, 17 March 1888.

continued presence of these 'aliens' would invariably have a negative impact on Australia's racial composition and its democratic principles.<sup>271</sup> William Lane therefore declared that 'we want a race war which will weld us whites into a homogenous mass.'<sup>272</sup> To reveal the extent of this purported racial threat moral, eugenic and economic fears were canvassed widely. Incorporated in the various predictive scenarios were the lurid images of the corrupted innocence of white women and the disfigurement associated with Asiatic vice and disease. The *Bundaberg Tribune* argued in February 1888 that 'any attempted amalgamation of the leprous heathen with the pale-faced races of the west can only result in the racial deterioration and the moral extinction of the latter'.<sup>273</sup> The *Northern Miner* warned its working class readers that if they were inactive 'they will be drowned in a deluge of Chinese, or be wiped off by leprosy and small-pox' or more specifically that 'the Chinese.... all are working together to pull down the miner's wages'.<sup>274</sup> In this tense atmosphere McIlwraith's more decisive stance on the Chinese held a greater appeal to the urban electorates and to white labour.<sup>275</sup> The endorsement of four Labour candidates had rather prematurely been described as the existence of a 'Third Party', and whilst the *Boomerang* dismissed the assertion as a 'bogey' its comments on the underlying strategy of the 'newly organised Labour party' is notable for to all intents and purposes both scenarios did eventuate. The *Boomerang* outlined that Labour 'must of very necessity either drive the two old

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<sup>270</sup> 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 9 March 1888; 'Editorial', *Queensland Figaro*, 17 March 1888.

<sup>271</sup> Inundation or engulfment was the principal white fear of the Chinese and in Queensland this was statistically substantiated threat. Queensland had arguably the most restrictive anti-Chinese immigration policy and this was reflected in the number of Chinese present in the colony, which totalled in 1887 11,500, a figure that represented 3.3 per cent of the colony's non-Aboriginal population. In Brisbane, the main centre of anti-Chinese activity the town's 200 Chinese represented 0.23 per cent of the population. Evans, 'Night of the Broken Glass': 50.

<sup>272</sup> 'Australian for Australians', *Boomerang*, 4 January 1888

<sup>273</sup> *Bundaberg Tribune*, 17 February 1888 cited in Evans, 'Night of the Broken Glass': 50.

<sup>274</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 21 March 1888.

<sup>275</sup> In 1883 the Liberals won all of the 6 Metropolitan electorates, it was a Liberal stronghold. McIlwraith's new Nationalist party in 1888 won 4 of these seats. McCormack, 'The Politics of Expediency': 201.

parties into one or draw one of the two into accepting its platform whereupon it becomes merged again in the advance guard of that progressive party.'<sup>276</sup> The latter occurred in 1888 with McIlwraith in effect diverting the workers support away from the Liberals with his modified economic and ardent anti-Chinese policies. The political combination of the two old parties as a defensive move against Labour would have arguably been unimaginable in 1888 yet this would take place July 1890.

In 1883 Griffith had been elected on a platform of major reforms for the social improvement of Queensland. Public reaction to McIlwraith's transcontinental railway and 'Coolie' labour proposal and the attempted annexation of New Guinea had provoked a widespread desire for political change. To Griffith 'there never was in the history of this colony a more important period in its public affairs than the present. The tide was just on the turn.'<sup>277</sup> The overwhelming vote attained by Griffith reflected, a Northern Resident declared 'an entire revolution in the Government of the colony.'<sup>278</sup> In essence Queensland's political culture had moved away from traditional economic doctrines towards a consideration of the social question.

'The *crux* on which the fate of the present ministry' depended was the *Crown Lands Act*.<sup>279</sup> While described as 'perhaps the most important milestone in our career, so far as Land legislation is concerned' it was the failure of its financial clauses that incrementally weakened the basis of Griffith's popular and ministerial

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<sup>276</sup> 'Bystander's Note-Book', *Boomerang*, 28 April 1888.

<sup>277</sup> 'Mr. Griffith at the Town Hall', *Queenslander*, 18 August 1883.

<sup>278</sup> 'A Northern Resident', 'Separation. Letter to the Editor', *Queenslander*, 15 November 1884.

<sup>279</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 12 March 1884.

support.<sup>280</sup> An additional effect and one prompted by the colony's mounting deficit and growing unemployment was the public desire to return to the proven economic applications of Sir Thomas Mcllwraith, Queensland's 'unrivalled financier'.<sup>281</sup> The electoral victory of Mcllwraith in 1888 did not represent a complete return to the halcyon days of economically expedient policies rather; it was a practical but conditional transfer. To win electoral support Mcllwraith had modified his economic stance and had pledged to retain the Liberal government's significant labour reforms.

Though land reform had been heralded as 'the cardinal question of the day' it was arguably the subject of coloured labour that was the most decisive and defining issue of the 1883-1888 period.<sup>282</sup> Griffith's various amendments of the *Pacific Island Labourers Act* indirectly and directly initiated a series of significant developments. Of particular relevance to Queensland's involvement in the federal movement was the conversion and consolidation of Northern grievances into a formally organised separation movement and second, the growth and politicisation of a white labour collective. These two dynamic internal pressure groups increasingly preoccupied and influenced local politics in Queensland. Archibald Meston predicted in June 1888 that Mcllwraith would have a difficult time ahead in view of the variant groups that had assembled under his political banner:

A choice crowd indeed to arrogate to themselves the position of 'National Democrats'! Ye Gods! What with the Separationists, the Ultra Squatters, the Protectionists, the Kanakaists, and other incompatible sections he has a cheerful time ahead. Do not despair!<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 322.

<sup>281</sup> 'Bushman', Letter to the Editor of *Mackay Mercury*, 10 April 1888.

<sup>282</sup> S.G. Mee, 'The Cardinal Question of the Day', *Northern Miner*. 19 November 1883.

<sup>283</sup> Archibald Meston to Griffith, 6 June 1888, 'Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1887-1891. MSQ 187'.

On the broader national Australian front, the onset of separatist agitation and the development of a labour agenda had furthered the emergent rationality of racial homogeneity as an Australian ideal and its consequent role as a practical and motivational argument for federation. This rhetoric of race against coloured intruders had created a semblance of cohesion amongst the autonomous colonial entities. Robert Thomson thus argued in 1888:

The population of the whole island is, with utterly insignificant exceptions, of a purely British character, and instead of differences of opinion on the question of servile labour, there is such identity of interests and of sentiments on the question of coloured labour, as to form a distinct bond of union between the masses in all parts of the continent. In all of these circumstances the pathway to Australian Federation is a much smoother one than that which lay before Franklin and his coadjutors.<sup>284</sup>

White Australia as a national and racial construct had begun its development as a determinate in the federal cause. In the domestic politics of Queensland the entanglement of the coloured labour question with the regional demands for territorial separation and the political activism of labour would intensify in the 1890s. The political and social instability produced by these three but interrelated internal issues was such that it enforced a narrow domestic focus and this led to Queensland assuming a somewhat ambiguous position in the renewed 1890s federal movement. While key political figures such as Griffith played an influential role in progressing the political movement for federal union, local matters persistently curbed the formation of any sustained internal interest in the cause. This therefore was problematical for the proposed political merger of all the Australian colonies. Yet, at the same time Queensland's ongoing internal debate on Melanesian labour aided the federal cause by providing a cohesive national racial objective.

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<sup>284</sup> Robert Thomson, *Australian Nationalism: An Earnest Appeal to the Sons of Australia in Favour of the Federation and Independence of the States of Our Country*. Burwood: Moss Brothers, 1888: 150.



## Chapter 6

### **‘Queensland and Federation. Why Does She Not Co-Operate’<sup>1</sup>**

‘The first movement worthy of the noble object of bringing all Australia under one National Government,’ Sir Henry Parkes claimed in 1892, was that which arose from his October 1889 initiative.<sup>2</sup> Through a masterstroke of political influence and manoeuvring Parkes revived the federal sentiment associated with the ‘great and pressing’ question of colonial defence and succeeded in lifting ‘Federation above the dust of party politics, and an armoury of arguments.’<sup>3</sup> The springboard for Parkes’ action was the October 1889 report of Major General Bevan Edwards on the state of the Australian colonial defences, which ‘nearly frightened the various Colonies concerned into union.’<sup>4</sup> Edwards argued that if the colonies were required to depend on their own local forces ‘they would offer such a rich and tempting prize’ and thus without a federation of the military forces their ‘position

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<sup>1</sup> Newspaper Clipping 1897, ‘Federal Convention Papers: Correspondence and Papers from Chief Secretaries of Other Colonies Relating to Federation. 15 June 1889 - 2 March 1900’, SRS5384/1/ 5, QSA .

<sup>2</sup> Returning from Brisbane, after meeting with Queensland politicians on the topic of federation, Parkes stopped overnight on 24 October 1889 in his electorate Tenterfield. At a banquet held in his honour that evening in the School of Arts Parkes delivered a speech which contemporary historians of federation claimed ‘attracted attention throughout Australia, [and] opened a bold campaign for the appointment of a National Convention to draft a federal constitution.’ The importance of Parkes’ famous Tenterfield Oration has been disputed by historians and in particular A.G.L Shaw. Shaw cited the prominence that the *Sydney Morning Herald* gave to the speed of the express train that bore Parkes back from Tenterfield rather than to the content of his speech. Additionally, the Victorian paper the *Argus* described the language of the oration as ‘delightfully glowing but provokingly vague.’ While the speech was not widely reported the importance of Parkes’ call to the other Australian colonial governments ‘to unite and create a great National Government for all Australia’ lay in its indication that Parkes and New South Wales were finally prepared to co-operate and it was this aspect that federalists took up and promoted. Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*. 585.; Garran: *The Federation Movement and the Founding of the Commonwealth* (1933): 433; A.G.L. Shaw, ‘Centennial reflections on Sir Henry Parkes’ Tenterfield oration. -1889. Nan Phillips Memorial Lecture (3rd: 1989: Canberra): *Canberra Historical Journal*, 25 (March 1990): 2-10.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Wise, ‘The Struggle for Union: Episodes in the Movement for Australian Federation. 1. Tenterfield and After,’ *Lone Hand*, (August 1912): 283-89.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Salmon, ‘Australian Federation: Its Progress and Its Prospects,’ *Fortnightly Review*, 64 (July 1895): 61-77.

would be one of great danger.’<sup>5</sup> Edwards later claimed that Parkes, ‘saw at once that combined action for the purposes of defence was impossible without a Federal Government to direct and control it. He therefore became the champion of the great question of Colonial Federation.’<sup>6</sup> What resulted were two ‘memorable’ intercolonial gatherings that exclusively considered the ‘weighty question’ of Australian federation.<sup>7</sup> The first assembled in Melbourne in February 1890 where two representatives from each of the Australian colonies and New Zealand discussed whether the ‘time [was] ripe for the further extension of Federation’.<sup>8</sup>

The Australasian Federation Conference unanimously resolved that:

the best interests and the present and future prosperity of the Australian colonies will be promoted by an early union under the Crown, and while fully recognizing the valuable services of the members of the Convention of 1883 in founding the Federal Council, it declares its opinion that the seven years which have since elapsed have developed the national life of Australasia population, in wealth, in the discovery of resources, and in self-governing capacity, to an extent which justifies the higher act, at all times contemplated, of the union of these Colonies, under one legislative and executive Government on principles just to the several Colonies.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Edwards developed a strong interest in federation. Queensland’s Governor Sir Henry Norman remarked to the New South Wales Governor, Lord Carrington, in November 1889 that Edwards never ‘conversed with any one here on the subject for more than five minutes without pointing a moral in the direction of federation.’ Contrary to the ‘legend’ that Parkes reacted to Edwards’ report it is likely that he had foreknowledge of its contents and had in fact influenced its principle recommendation. Edwards went to extraordinary lengths to reinforce the prospect of an invasion and to demonstrate his eagerness to assist the cause of federation. In a letter to Parkes from Hong Kong in January 1890, he wrote that, ‘a portion of the Chinese Imperial Squadron is now at anchor under my window....Admiral Ting who commands is an old friend of mine....I have been urging him strongly to take his fleet and show his flag in foreign parts especially in Australia but he cannot go this year further than Singapore – Would not that help your federation?’ Based on further correspondence R. Norris argued that in return for supplying ‘some common need’ for federation Edwards hoped to be appointed Inspector-General of the colonial forces to prepare them for federation. Major-General J. Bevan Edwards, ‘Proposed Organization of the Military Forces of the Australian Colonies’, 9 October 1889, cited in M.J. Jennings, (ed.), *Federation: A Collection of Contemporary Documents*. Melbourne: Hill of Content Publishing Co, 1967: 33-38; Norman to Carrington, 27 November 1889 cited in Brian de Garis, ‘Western Australia’, Irving, (ed.), *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*.: 288-89; Edwards to Parkes, 24 January 1890, Sir Henry Parkes Correspondence, A921 Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales; Norris, *The Emergent Commonwealth. Australian Federation: Expectations and Fulfilment 1889-1910*. 110-11.

<sup>6</sup> General Sir Bevan Edwards, ‘Australasian Defence,’ *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, 22 (March 1891): 195-224.

<sup>7</sup> Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*: 610; Duncan Gillies to Henry Parkes, 13 November 1889, ‘Most Strictly Confidential Paper: Sir Henry Parkes’ Federation Scheme. Part II – 1890’: 7-9.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Playford, South Australia, ‘Admission of the Press’, 6<sup>th</sup> February 1890, *Official Record of Proceedings and Debates of the Australasian Federation Conference, Melbourne 1890*. Melbourne: Robert S. Brain, Government Printer, 1890: 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*: 251.

The next step, it was resolved, was to summon a National Australasian Convention to consider and report upon an adequate scheme for a Federal Constitution. After considerable activity between the various colonial premiers the Convention convened in Sydney in March 1891. The forty-six delegates from the various Australian colonies and New Zealand represented, Parkes' declared, 'beyond all dispute the most august assembly which Australia had ever seen'.<sup>10</sup> Much historical significance was therefore bestowed on the Convention. The *Queenslander* lauded it as marking the arrival of a new epoch in Australian history, the 'Federal Epoch'.<sup>11</sup> In accordance with its sole mandate the Convention drafted, amended and adopted 'The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia' and recommended that it be submitted to each colony's parliament for approval.<sup>12</sup> Robert Garran recounted in 1897 that by successfully framing a 'Commonwealth Bill' the Convention had:

caught, and crystallized into a definite shape, the vague, floating ideas which had long been in the air; and it thus afforded for the first time a practical standpoint from which to debate the whole subject and upon which to found a national sentiment.<sup>13</sup>

The prominence that Queensland's premier Sir Samuel Griffith had attained at the Convention was prestigious for the colony. Alfred Deakin claimed that 'by its close Griffith's influence had become supreme.'<sup>14</sup> Griffith had been appointed the Vice-president of the Convention; he had been 'accorded the distinction of [being] the third' speaker, which it was presumed to mean that Queensland now ranked third amongst the colonies, and most notably he was one of principal drafters of the

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<sup>10</sup> Deakin's assessment of the Convention concurs with that of Parkes that it was by far the most important representative gathering which had ever met in Australia.' Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*: 610; Deakin, *The Federal Story*: 33.

<sup>11</sup> 'The Federal Epoch. Notes on the Sydney Convention', *Queenslander*, 7 March 1891.

<sup>12</sup> Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*.: 943-64.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Garran, *The Coming Commonwealth: An Australian Handbook of Federal Government*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1897: 116.

<sup>14</sup> Deakin, *The Federal Story: The Inner History of the Federal Cause*.: 52.

Constitution.<sup>15</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald* rightly noted that Griffith had been ably assisted by the Tasmanian Andrew Inglis Clark and the South Australian Charles Kingston but concluded that the Constitution Bill 'was largely [Griffith's] own offspring; the language of it, terse and free from legal subtleties, is his; and most of the ideas which it contains have emanated from his active brain.'<sup>16</sup>

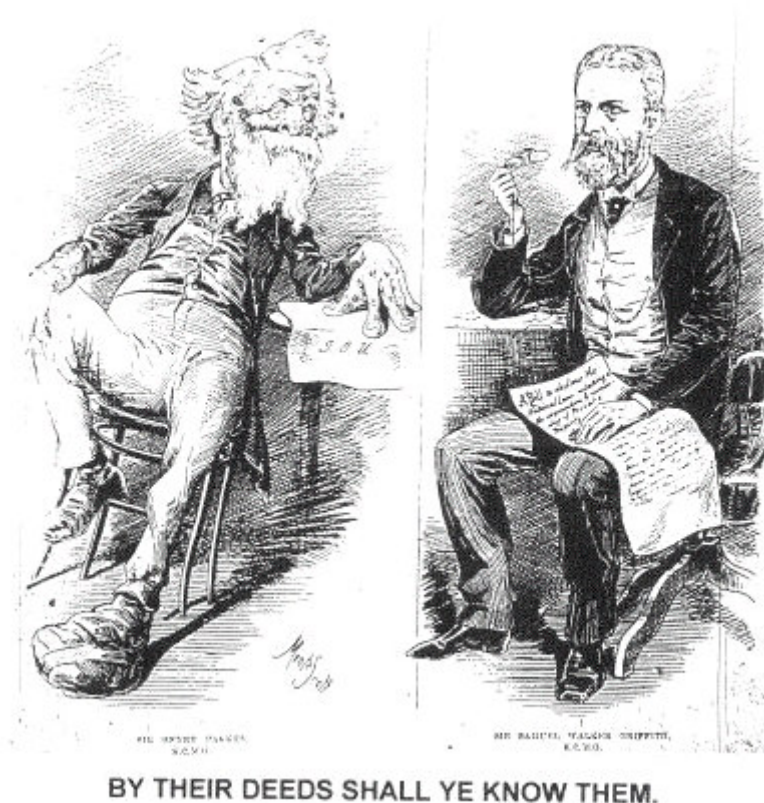


Figure 6.1: The *Boomerang*, 17 January 1891

The Queensland tributes were more exalted. W. Kinnaird Rose declared to Griffith that 'in the history of the Great Austral Nation hundreds of years hence your name as the Maker of Australia...will stand out more prominently than those of Jefferson

<sup>15</sup> 'The Federal Epoch', *Queenslander*, 7 March 1891.

<sup>16</sup> This long held acclamation of Griffith's key role in drafting the Constitution has been challenged with Tasmania's representative Andrew Inglis Clark being advanced as the principal architect. Griffith did not produce a draft Constitution for Convention while Clark produced a ninety-two section draft from this eighty-six feature in a recognisable form in the final Constitution. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10, 11 April 1891, cited in Nauze, *The Making of the Australian Constitution*. 74-75; Ely, 'Andrew Inglis Clark: Father of Australian Federation?', 33-34; Williams, 'Race, Citizenship and the Formation of the Australian Constitution: Andrew Inglis Clark and the "14th Amendment"', 10-23.

and Adams in America for you are alone.’<sup>17</sup> Griffith’s acclaim assumed and continued to occupy the centre of Queensland’s ‘Federation mosaic’ for it was the pinnacle of Queensland’s formal involvement in the movement.<sup>18</sup> ‘After a splutter of fire’ the federal question immediately became a ‘dead rocket’ in Queensland and remained so until 1899.<sup>19</sup> This chapter will examine the dynamics of this state of affairs in Queensland during the 1890s. Whilst a conglomerate of economic, personal, political and climatic factors implicated in Queensland’s hesitancy are overviewed, this chapter core focus is on the significant and continued bearing that Queensland’s perennial issues of separation, coloured labour, and the emergent labour movement had on the federal cause. The notable variant in the 1890s was that while Queensland had little interest in or involvement with the advancement of the federal cause, internally the broader question of federation ‘got mixed up’ with these perennial matters and did in fact exert an influence.<sup>20</sup> The manner in which separation, labour and federation intersected in Queensland in the 1890s can be characterised as a period of mutual hindrance. This was manifested most decisively in the intersection between the ‘momentous question’ of separation and federation.<sup>21</sup>

Why Queensland ‘reverted to the lethargy of indifference’ and remained outside the formal process of negotiations does not feature in the conventional accounts of the federation movement.<sup>22</sup> Primarily this was because such an explanation was

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<sup>17</sup> W. Kinnaird Rose to Griffith, 17 November 1892, ‘Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1891-1895. MSQ 188’, .

<sup>18</sup> J. Warner to Griffith, 15 March 1893, *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Week*, 20 March 1891.

<sup>20</sup> W. Wilson to Samuel Griffith, 17 November 1892, ‘Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1891-1895. MSQ 188.’

<sup>21</sup> J.C. Neild, ‘Obstacles to Federation,’ *Cosmos: An Illustrated Australian Magazine*, (December 1894): 210-17.

<sup>22</sup> Salmon, ‘Australian Federation: Its Progress and Its Prospects,’ 67-77.

not within the scope of enquiry, which centred on the movement's formal political negotiations at the various intercolonial conferences and conventions. Contemporarily there was much public commentary on why Queensland had 'turned its back' on federation.<sup>23</sup> Routinely, Queensland's ambivalence was ascribed to the colony's apprehension that a 'Federal Law' would be introduced to abolish the employment of coloured labour.<sup>24</sup> Queensland's local press however outlined quite distinctly that Queensland had dropped the federal question due to the pressures of local issues. As early as July 1891 *Queensland Punch* observed that:

Australian Federation seems to crab it along sideways, and it does not appear likely to promise any definite results for years to come....We in Queensland have our Strike absorbing all our attention, and the Northern and Central Separation questions mingling with the Federation issue.<sup>25</sup>

The New South Wales politician J.C. Neild, based on his visit to Queensland in late 1892, was 'strongly impressed' by the lack of interest shown in federation but directly attributed this to domestic issues:

With the momentous question of the subdivision of her own vast territory persistently forced upon her; with a phenomenal conflict occurring annually in her pastoral districts; with the coloured labour problems demanding consideration and solution, to say nothing of the antics of Socialists and the turmoil of party politics, Queensland has her hands fully occupied without seeking extended responsibilities in the unexplored realms of Australian Federation.<sup>26</sup>

Manifestly, local issues continued to eclipse any consideration of the federal question in Queensland. That 'there was more urgent business to be dealt with by the legislatures' of each colony had been the 'fatal impediment to [federal] action'

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<sup>23</sup> G.B. Barton, 'Notes on Federation and the Draft Bill', *Evening News*, 11 February 1897, 'G.B. Barton Papers: Press Cuts 1897', MS78, Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales.

<sup>24</sup> 'Australian Federation: Notes of Views Expressed at the National Convention of 1891, and in the Parliament of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia 1891, 1892 also at Bathurst Federation Convention, 1897. Prepared by W.C. Cave-Browne, Premiers Office, Melbourne', R216/1/112, National Archives of Australia, Canberra.

<sup>25</sup> *Queensland Punch*, 1 July 1891.

from 1860.<sup>27</sup> An 1875 critique remained applicable in the early 1890s:

Absorbed by local matters, occupied with questions of no more than provincial interest, essential yet not supreme, the Australian colonies appear to have no time to spare for the consideration of those subjects of weightier import which tower a head and shoulders above minor themes....things of national importance, intimately connected with the future of Australia, are allowed to pass.<sup>28</sup>

From 1891 to 1895 Queensland was not alone in its indifference to the federal proposal. In this period the movement for federation stalled in all of the colonies as a result of the enormous political and social consequences associated with the onset of a severe and worldwide economic depression.<sup>29</sup> The severity of the depression in the Australian colonies was in a large part attributable to the great influx of British capital into the colonies during the 1880s. By 1890 Australia's reliance on British finance was such that 40 per cent of the colonies export income was required to service its debt to Britain.<sup>30</sup> From 1889 however Australia's export income was declining due to the onset of drought conditions and falling wool prices. The continuation of high levels of capital inflow temporarily concealed these factors. The 1891-92 confluence of internal conditions with the external event of the collapse of London's large financial institutions triggered widespread bank failures and soaring unemployment in all the colonies, except Western Australia. Each colony that came under the grip of the worst depression Australia

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<sup>26</sup> Neild was Member for Paddington in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. Neild, 'Obstacles to Federation': 213.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Cowper and Sir Charles Gavan Duffy cited in Allin, *The Early Federation Movement of Australia*. 373-74.

<sup>28</sup> 'The Essayist', 'The Federation of Australia. No.1', *Queenslander*, 9 January 1875.

<sup>29</sup> The economic crash was triggered by the collapse of Baring Brothers Bank, one of London's leading financial houses. Political and financial upheaval in Argentina in 1890 had resulted in the country defaulting on their loans to Baring's and panic ensued. London's moneymen quickly called in their paper and withdrew from various markets, including Australia effectively cutting Australia's access to foreign investment capital. Local credit in Australia subsequently tightened and individual investors and depositors hastened to withdraw their capital forcing many banks to suspend operation. David Cameron, 'An Historical Assessment of Economic Development, Manufacturing and the Political Economy in Queensland, 1900 to 1930,' Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 1999: 76-77.

<sup>30</sup> Cameron, 'An Historical Assessment of Economic Development, Manufacturing and the Political Economy in Queensland, 1900 to 1930': 76.

had experienced, not surprisingly became 'absorbed' by 'political vicissitudes, and the stress of urgent local questions'.<sup>31</sup>

In Queensland the impact of the 1890s depression was extended and devastating. The colony had been economically teetering 'on the brink of a volcano' since 1887 and the 'lamentable state' of the colony's financial position had been a prominent and determining issue in the 1888 election defeat of the Griffith government.<sup>32</sup> Attempts to reduce expenditure and the introduction of a revenue raising policy of full-scale protection failed to prevent the colony recording a deficit of £483,970 in 1890, making Queensland's total deficit £969,000.<sup>33</sup> Queensland's tenuous position was further aggravated by the return in 1889 of severe drought conditions and the escalation in industrial disputes, which climaxed in 1891 with a six-month pastoral strike. At breaking point Queensland attempted in mid-May 1891 to raise a £2,500,000 loan in London for public works and to cover £1,170,950 interest debt that fell due on 1 July 1891.<sup>34</sup> The *Times* referred to Queensland's 'surprisingly unwise action' as a 'fiasco'.<sup>35</sup> The 'rebuff' by the London money market the *Australian Insurance and Banking Record* commented 'was as

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<sup>31</sup> By mid-1892 21 Melbourne and 20 Sydney based land and building institutions had suspended business. George Reid to Hugh Nelson, 22 August 1894, 'Federal Convention Papers: Correspondence and Papers from Chief Secretaries of Other Colonies Relating to Federation. 15 June 1889 - 2 March 1900', ; B.K. de Garis, 1890-1900', Frank Crowley (ed.), *A New History of Australia*. Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1976:219.

<sup>32</sup> A.G. Stephens, *The Griffilwraith: Being an Independent Criticism of the Methods and Manoeuvres of the Queensland Coalition Government, 1890 -1893*. Brisbane: Edwards, Dunlop & Co, 1893: 25.

<sup>33</sup> William Richmond, 'Government and Economic Development in Queensland 1883-1914: A Study in Policy Making.' Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 1987:21.

<sup>34</sup> 'The Money Market', *Times*, 21 May 1891.

<sup>35</sup> The total amount of subscriptions for the loan in June was £296,800. Queensland's overseas credit was further weakened by the dispute that followed between McIlwraith and the Bank of England the agent appointed for raising and managing the loans of Queensland. Prompted by the abject failure of the loan McIlwraith charged the Governor of the Bank of England of not acting 'as an honest banker would'. In response the Governor declined to transact the colony's business this forced a rare apology from McIlwraith. 'The Money Market', *Times*, 1 June 1891; Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith: His Public Career and Political Thought. A Short Essay', Unpublished BA Honours Thesis, University of Queensland, 1951: 148.



complete a failure as has yet been suffered by an Australian colony.<sup>36</sup> Queensland's entrenched policy of extensive borrowing for public works, principally for the construction of railways and secondly to meet interest payments on already borrowed capital was widely held, by mid-1892, to be 'responsible almost solely for the stagnant depression that now afflicts us.'<sup>37</sup> The failure to secure the 1891 loan reflected a growing impatience with the way in which Queensland utilised loan money. The *Times* declared in July 1891, that by the 'present fiasco' Queensland had been 'shown the necessity of discontinuing...expenditure of money raised by loan upon public works.'<sup>38</sup> Stemming from the failure of the government loan, overseas and individual investors, throughout 1891 and 1892, began and continued to withdraw their money from Queensland banks and finance companies. The cessation of all public works and considerable retrenchment in the Civil Service further compounded soaring unemployment, especially in Brisbane and in turn further depressed the economy. By February 1892 Queensland's general business was paralysed and property was judged to be 'practically valueless.'<sup>39</sup> By May 1893 Queensland's leading financial institution the Queensland National Bank and thirteen other banks had suspended business.<sup>40</sup> Then when 'financial troubles seemed

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<sup>36</sup> *Australian Insurance and Banking Record*, 6 July 1891 cited in Jacqueline McCormack, 'The Politics of Expediency: Queensland Government in the Eighteen Nineties', Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Queensland, 1974: 76-77.

<sup>37</sup> At the end of 1890 Queensland's total overseas debt was £28,105,684 and the annual interest payments amounted to nearly £1,140,000. *Maryborough Chronicle*, 9 June 1892 cited in McCormack, 'The Politics of Expediency': 71.

<sup>38</sup> 'The Money Market', *Times*, 2 July 1891.

<sup>39</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 10 February 1892 cited in McCormack, 'The Politics of Expediency': 62.

<sup>40</sup> Established in 1872 the Queensland National Bank (QNB), under McIlwraith's patronage, became in 1879 the Government's bankers. Administering the massive influx of public money rapidly propelled the QNB into a leading position amongst the colony's financial institutions. Following the substantial deposits from Australian, English and Scottish investors the Bank undertook an 'orgy of lending' and by 1890 immense amounts had been advanced. Though temporarily aided by the Queensland Government's £600,000 loan raised in London in 1892 the Bank suspended business in May 1893. The true extent of the QNB's suspect banking practices was revealed in 1897 after the 1896 death of Edward Robert Drury, Queensland National Bank's General Manager. Edward Ralston was appointed as Drury's replacement and he found that the QNB was operating at a substantial loss and would without assistance go into liquidation. Political and public pressure forced the then Premier Hugh Nelson to appoint a committee investigation into the business and affairs of the QNB and

insurmountable...the great floods came'.<sup>41</sup> The depression reached its nadir in 1893 and a gradual recovery followed. In 1895 a substantial surplus of £104,738 was achieved.<sup>42</sup> The Queensland premier and treasurer Hugh Nelson however warned in his July 1895 Financial Statement that: 'We are not yet so far out of the wood that we can begin to holla'.<sup>43</sup>

Under the exemplary conditions created by the colony's worsening financial position an extraordinary coalition was formed in 1890 between Sir Samuel Griffith and Sir Thomas Mcllwraith. Even though the possibility of this coalition had been discussed in political circles it still provoked a shocked response from many. A.G. Stephens consequently declared:

no more unlikely thing could have happened. The two had been opponents for so long...their conflict had on many occasions been so bitter...that obviously only an extraordinary concatenation of circumstances could have brought about a coalition about.<sup>44</sup>

More unexpected was the 1893 departure from political life of these two prominent figures in Queensland's political, social and economic development.<sup>45</sup> What followed the commanding leadership styles of Griffith and Mcllwraith was, as Duncan Waterson phrased it, 'the lackluster continuous ministries with their

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its past management. Tabling of the report was delayed until November 1897 and it revealed serious mismanagement and more particularly implicated Sir Thomas Mcllwraith and Edward Drury both for highly suspect financial manipulation – both had huge unauthorised and unsecured overdrafts. Mcllwraith was made the absentee scapegoat and he was impressed upon to resign as a member of the Executive Council, which he submitted in early December 1897. In a letter to Nelson in January 1898 Mcllwraith charged Nelson, the Ministry and the House charging him without evidence from him and 'proceeded to pass and execute judgement with a ferocity unparalleled even in Colonial warfare.' Tony Gough, 'Tom Mcllwraith, Ted Drury, Hugh Nelson and the Queensland National Bank 1896-1897,' *Queensland Heritage*, 3:9 (November 1978): 3-13.

<sup>41</sup> William Osbourne Lilley cited in Duncan Waterson, 'Conflict, Conservation and Continuity: Queensland's Continuous Ministries 1893 -1899,' Joanne Scott and Kay Saunders, (eds.), *The World's First Labor Government*. Brisbane: Watson Ferguson & Co, 2001: 17-18.

<sup>42</sup> Richmond, 'Government and Economic development in Queensland 1883-1914': 21.

<sup>43</sup> Quote cited in Richmond, 'Government and Economic development in Queensland 1883-1914': 9.

<sup>44</sup> Stephens, *The Griffilwraith: Being an Independent Criticism of the Methods and Manoeuvres of the Queensland Coalition Government, 1890 -1893*: 8-9.

<sup>45</sup> Mcllwraith's health had been failing since 1889 and in 1893 his doctors instructed him to immediately retire from public life. Griffith's political and professional work he claimed had physically weakened him but it was

absence of vibrant personalities'<sup>46</sup> In October 1893 Hugh Nelson succeeded as premier. On the issue of territorial separation, Nelson's 1893 -1898 premiership did however present a decisive degree of consistency with his predecessors.<sup>47</sup>

The separatist issue was one that encapsulated many of Queensland's distinctive qualities. At its core the perennial demands for the territorial subdivision of Queensland were both symptomatic and representative of Queensland's strident developmental ethos and resultant political culture. Autonomy and economic prosperity were Queensland's two persuasive themes and not surprisingly they constituted the core objectives of each region's demands for their separation from Brisbane's administration. To safeguard the complete integrity of Queensland's hard fought right 'to be [the] masters of their situation', the Queensland parliament routinely opposed all petitions for separation and remained indifferent to federation.<sup>48</sup> What transpired in the 1890s was that each movement became the counteroffensive measure to the other. Federation became the 'red-herring drawn...across the trail' of separation while alternatively separation was described as being 'from the Devil while Federation is from Heaven.'<sup>49</sup>

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largely for financial reasons that Griffith accepted the post of Chief Justice particularly after the salary was increased from £2500 to £3500.

<sup>46</sup> Waterson, 'Conflict, Conservation and Continuity: Queensland's Continuous Ministries 1893 –1899': 18.

<sup>47</sup> Hugh Nelson (1833-1906) Born in Ayrshire Scotland Nelson migrated to Queensland in 1853 and after working, as storekeeper's clerk in Ipswich moved became a station hand and then pastoralist. In 1883, after a unsuccessful attempt in 1879, Nelson was elected as the Member for Northern Downs. A strong supporter of McIlwraith he held several key portfolios in McIlwraith's various governments; Secretary for Railways in 1888, Railways and Public Works in 1890, Acting Treasurer and then Treasurer in 1893 He succeeded as Premier in October 1893 following McIlwraith's resignation for health reasons. D.B. Waterson, Sir Hugh Muir Nelson', *Australian Dictionary of Biography – Online Edition*: <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu/biogs/A03001b.htm>.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Christison, *Our Colonies Suffering A Recovery*. Hobart: 'The Mercury' Stream Press Office, 1894: 5; Arthur Macalister cited in Nicholson, 'The Principles Which Ought to Regulate the Determination of the Political and Municipal Boundaries and Divisions of the Colonies,' 338.

<sup>49</sup> *The Morning Bulletin*, 19 January 1899; E. N. R., *Separation First: An Essay on The Commonwealth Bill*, E. Gostelow, C. Q. Printing Works, Rockhampton: 1899: 58.

In 1886 the subject of North Queensland's territorial separation was indelibly interlinked with the broader matter of Australia's political federation through the contentious claim of Samuel Griffith that the main reason for separatist action was to secure a coloured labour force. The intrinsic threat of 'a colony of caste' being established in North Queensland, one antagonistic to the homogenous development of a white Australia remained a compelling force in the federal movement.<sup>50</sup> The *Brisbane Courier* outlined the broader ramifications of this local contention:

The importance of the separation movement is determined rather by its bearing on the future of Australia than merely on the convenience of this particular colony....One point to which we think separationists...should address themselves, is the effect that the separation of tropical Queensland is likely to have on the future dominion of Australia....a race aristocracy, will confront the Australian white democracy...we may leave to our children such a legacy of evil as that from which America has only rid herself by the most terrible fratricidal war which modern world has seen.<sup>51</sup>

During the 1890s the bearing that Queensland's coloured labour policy had on the question of federation was more consistently and intensely played out in the southern colonies. The basis for the ongoing and external disparagement of Queensland was Griffith's February 1892 announcement that the importation of 'Kanaka' labour would be extended for ten years.<sup>52</sup> Under Queensland's 1885 *Act to Further Amend the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880, and To Put a Limit to its Operation* the importation of Pacific Island labour was to cease entirely in 1893. The impact of the economic depression was the underlying basis for Griffith's volte-face on his staunch opposition to the employment of coloured labour. In a frank statement outlining his decision Griffith accorded 'much of the blame or

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<sup>50</sup> Alcazar Press, *Queensland 1900: A Narrative of Her Past Together With Biographies of Her Leading Men*. 155.

<sup>51</sup> 'Editorial', *Brisbane Courier*, 21 August 1886.

<sup>52</sup> Samuel Griffith had regained the premiership in August 1890 through a coalition government with his long-term rival McIlwraith - this government was euphemistically referred to as the Griffithwraith government.

credit' for 'the existing state of things' to himself or more specifically to the impact of his reforms during his 1883-1888 premiership.<sup>53</sup> While Griffith's decision, Governor Norman reported immediately 'had an excellent effect, and has put heart into the Planter community' it was not well received in the southern colonies.<sup>54</sup> The Presbyterian Missionary John G. Paton pleaded with Griffith not to renew the labour traffic:

But surely Sir Samuel, you whose praise has been proclaimed all over the world, for your humane and wise policy getting this labour traffic suppressed in Queensland, because of its crimes and murders, will never be to also to condone all by proclaiming its continuation for another ten years....I plead most earnestly with you in the interests of humanity, for you over honour, and the honour of Queensland and Australia on no account to renew the Polynesian Labour Traffic.<sup>55</sup>

Griffith was vehemently attacked by the *Bulletin* who referred to him as 'Samuel Griffith – Nigger Driver' and his 'conversion to black labour' was plainly declared as being antithetical to the 'necessity for preserving Australia for the Australians'.<sup>56</sup> In March 1892 the *Pacific Island Labourers (Extension) Act* was introduced to the Queensland Parliament and passed with little protest. The independent manner in which Queensland had acted gave greater cause to the necessity for a Federal body to arbitrate such 'contentious political questions'.<sup>57</sup> Henry Parkes condemned Queensland's 'readiness to engage in a parleying with slavery' and put it forward as a definitive rationale for federation:

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<sup>53</sup> 'To the People of Queensland', 13 February 1892 cited in 'Sir Anthony Musgrave Papers. MFM M412', National Library of Australia

<sup>54</sup> In Britain the public campaign against Queensland was revived. Queensland's Agent General James Garrick 1894 report listed the publications that were 'issued and largely distributed throughout the United Kingdom' as an answer to the various statements and representations of those against the colony's labour policy. Norman to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Knutsford, 24 February 1892, 'Letterbooks of Confidential Despatches to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Volume 1. 29 January 1868 - 7 June 1892', ; 'Report of the Agent General of Queensland for the Year 1894', cited in 'Copies of Official Reports to the Agent General, London from G. Randall. Volume 4: 1894-1899', 'Gall Collection UQFL 43', Fryer Library, University of Queensland .

<sup>55</sup> J.G. Paton to Griffith, 20 February 1892, 'Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1891-1895. MSQ 188.'

<sup>56</sup> 'Samuel Griffith – Nigger Driver', *Bulletin*, 27 February 1892.

<sup>57</sup> Samuel Griffith to Charles Kingston South Australia, 3 June 1892 cited in Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*: 323-24.

Queensland has considered the question without your leave or advice, and has decided for herself. Sir Samuel Griffith has gone through his recantation, and has deliberately shifted his footing from the rock to the sand....Queensland has acted within her constitutional right, and she knows it, and proudly tells the intermeddlers around her to mind their own business. But there is above and beyond Queensland a more powerful voice – the voice of the free people of Australia....If her neighbours have no status for active interference, they have the right and the duty of remonstrance; and the right and duty to let the world know that this diseased passion for degraded labour is confined within the borders of Queensland....the colonies...should speak out the true voice of all and insist upon the preservation of this Australian land for an Australian Commonwealth<sup>58</sup>

Throughout the decade there was an 'ominous silence' on the question of indentured Melanesian labour in the Queensland Parliament while in contrast external forces harnessed the issue as a rallying force for federation.<sup>59</sup> A Federal parliament, it was repeatedly argued, would 'put a very speedy and effective check on the coloured aliens'.<sup>60</sup> Though Griffith publicly acknowledged in October 1890 that the 'coloured labour' charge was defunct in North Queensland's separatist demands the region remained the exemplar case for 'White Australia'.

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<sup>58</sup> Sir Henry Parkes, 'Letter to the Editor dated 10 June 1892', *Ibid*: 329-30.

<sup>59</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*. 71-72.

<sup>60</sup> 'VOTE FOR FEDERATION AND A WHITE AUSTRALIA' in 'Volume of Handbills and Newspaper Cuttings issued in Queensland 1899' donated by J. Bowel Wilson, Mitchell Library.



The *Bulletin's* map of Australia - showing the progress of federation up to date.

**Figure 6.2: The *Bulletin*, 4 February 1899**

Within Queensland, contrary to the colony's indifference to the federal question, the prospect of the coming federation was employed as a tactical device to impede the separatist aspirations of north and central Queensland. One of the fundamental assumptions of both the Northern and emergent Central Separation Leagues, based on an examination of the relevant Imperial Acts, was that the power to grant territorial separation rested exclusively with the Crown.<sup>61</sup> It was also determined that the consent of Queensland's parliament was not required as a pre-condition to the implementation of the Crown's separation powers for it was

<sup>61</sup> Though Rockhampton had been the site of Queensland's the first concerted action for territorial separation in 1860s the formation of an official representative body the Central Queensland Separation League did not take place until December 1889. In November 1890 the Central Queensland Separation League dispatched a separation petition embodying arguments equivalent to those of Northern Memorialists. Rockhampton has been acknowledged as the birthplace of separatist activity within the Colony of Queensland. In 1866 the first petition for separation was sent to the Imperial government. Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 508; Voss, 'Separatist Movements in Central Queensland in the Nineteenth Century': 36.

not 'even alluded to' in the Imperial legislation.<sup>62</sup> The opposing views of the Queensland government were therefore judged to be immaterial to the consideration of their petitions to the Queen. This fundamental position perpetually determined the strategies of separationists.

Each successive Queensland government had opposed any regional demand for the subdivision of the colony. Separatists therefore strategically bypassed the local parliamentary process and presented their case by means of letters, petitions and deputations directly to the British Colonial Office. The central issue therefore was whether the Crown lawfully had the power to erect, by Letters Patent, a separate colony out of the territory of Queensland. The Colonial Office referred the matter to the Crown Law Officers. Their report concluded that the powers conferred by the 1855 Imperial Act had been exhausted by the creation of Queensland and that a new Act would therefore be necessary to grant the Crown the power to divide Queensland. This proved to be an impenetrable barrier for the separatist cause. The Imperial Government could not interfere, without the assent of the Queensland Parliament, with the internal affairs of Queensland. To 'give the go-by to a Responsible Government' legislature' would have assuredly provoked significant protest and resentment from not only Queensland but from all the Australian colonies who jealously guarded their powers of self-government.<sup>63</sup> The opinion of the Queensland parliament consequently became a precondition for Imperial action.

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<sup>62</sup> The legitimacy of this approach was determined by Thankful Wilmett's 1885 examination of the relevant Imperial Acts, which he determined conferred and continuously confirmed the separation powers of the Crown. Thankfull Wilmett to Musgrave, 16 November 1885, Willmett to Musgrave, 16 November 1886, *QVP*, 1 (1886): 433.



In March 1890, Queensland's Premier Boyd Morehead, in a report on a letter declaring the case for northern separation and addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, argued that it was inopportune to consider the separation of northern Queensland in view of the probable federation of the Australian colonies, which would establish a parliament capable of adjusting the boundaries of the several colonies.<sup>64</sup> This was at odds with Morehead's known support of separation. Queensland's Agent General remarked in December 1888 that Morehead 'talks freely of separation'.<sup>65</sup> The reasoning Morehead outlined to Parliament was that 'as Premier I was bound, even if it was a bad case, to protect the integrity of the colony'.<sup>66</sup> There was, in evidence, a tacitly accepted view that the preservation of the colony's integrity was, despite personal views, the higher duty of each government. Weakening Morehead's federal argument was the assertion by Queensland's Governor Sir Henry Norman that it 'may be a long time before Federation is accomplished'.<sup>67</sup> The Colonial Office stalled and then concurred with Morehead's referral of the question to the federal parliament. Federation as a consequence increasingly played a prominent part in the arguments against separation.

A feature of Griffith's second premiership (August 1890 to March 1893) was a determination to subordinate the cause of separation through the advancement of

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<sup>63</sup> Robert Herbert, 18 January 1885, Colonial Office Minute, 16 January 1885, Queensland Despatch No.88, CO234/46 Queensland Original Correspondence, AJCP.

<sup>64</sup> On the retirement of Sir Thomas McIlwraith due to ill-health Boyd Morehead became the head of the Government in November 1888. Bernays succinctly described Morehead's ministry as 'unsuccessful' and its short-lived reign ended in August 1890 when the Morehead Government resigned over the land tax proposal. Morehead to Governor Norman, 28 March 1890, *QVP*, 1 (1890): 822-23; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*: 74.

<sup>65</sup> James Garrick to Griffith, 28<sup>th</sup> December 1888, 'Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1887-1891. MSQ 187',

<sup>66</sup> Morehead, *QPD*, 62 (1890): 1367.

<sup>67</sup> Sir Samuel Griffith remarked of Norman's sympathetic leaning toward separation and his resultant comments to the Secretary of State that he had been "made the victim of a company organised Separation

the federal objective. Griffith informed Lady Musgrave in October 1890 that 'the separation question is very much in my hands at present'.<sup>68</sup> In correspondence with Sir Henry Parkes he emphasised the interconnection between separation and federation:

I...have for some time been intending to write...but all my spare moments have been taken up with the difficulties connected with the Separation question in this colony, which is, as you know, intimately connected, with the question of Federation.<sup>69</sup>

In Townsville in December 1890 Griffith informed separationists of the futility of their petitions:

I tell you that your deputations to Lord Knutsford are simply beating the air....I venture to say that you may send as many as you like, but you will be told on every occasion that you must first go to the Queensland Parliament.<sup>70</sup>

Griffith not surprisingly urged the Colonial Office in December 1890, to postpone its consideration of a joint petition of the Northern and Central Leagues until the Federal Convention in Sydney, in March 1891, had decided upon the respective powers of the federal and state governments. Griffith had however clearly stated in the Queensland Parliament, in July 1890, what form the powers of the Federal government were likely to assume:

the Federal Parliament shall be prohibited from altering the boundaries of any colony without its express consent, and I think that may be taken for granted. No colony is going to give a Federal Parliament the power to cut it up into pieces at the sweet will of the other colonies.<sup>71</sup>

With Griffith as one of the principle authors of the 1891 Commonwealth Bill, Clause 5 Chapter VI consequently stated: 'A new state shall not be formed by

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case". Norman to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Knutsford, 7 April 1890, *QVP*, 1 (1890): 824; Griffith to Lady Lucinda Musgrave, 7 December 1890: Sir Anthony Musgrave Papers, ANL M412.

<sup>68</sup> Griffith to Lady Lucinda Musgrave, 11 October 1890: Sir Anthony Musgrave Papers, ANL M412.

<sup>69</sup> Griffith to Parkes, 11 November 1890, 'Sir Henry Parkes Correspondence'.

<sup>70</sup> Griffith, 27 December 1890 cited in Voss, 'Separatist Movements in Central Queensland in the Nineteenth Century': 89

<sup>71</sup> Copy of Debate in Legislative Assembly, 9 July 1890, Sir Samuel Griffith Papers Correspondence 1887 – 1891, MSQ 187 Dixon Library, State library of New South Wales.

separation of territory from a State *without the consent* of the Parliament thereof'.<sup>72</sup> Leading Central separationists, John Ferguson, John Murray and George Curtis, immediately sent telegrams of protest to Griffith, Parkes and McIlwraith, asserting that the inclusion of such a clause was a gross injustice and effectively blocked the creation of any new states.<sup>73</sup> Griffith contradictorily replied that 'after Federation there would be no difficulty in Parliament agreeing to such a division of Queensland'.<sup>74</sup> Griffith's adoption of the slogan 'Federation before Separation' denoted clearly the primacy of the federal cause to that of the separatists. Underpinning this was firstly the fundamental concern that the division of Queensland would weaken the colony's negotiating power in both the federal process and the future federal parliament, and secondly the potential economic ramifications of separation.

The North Queensland Separation League countered the first of these arguments by citing Parkes' 1889 statement that 'such a subdivision of colonies of excessive area as would secure at least ultimate equality of federal power must precede either Colonial or Imperial Federation of Australia.'<sup>75</sup> In the North and Central districts it was therefore argued that separation would assist federation by serving to equalise colonial territories. Governor Norman's assessment of the question argued the federal advantages of Queensland remaining one colony and outlined the inherent problem for separationists:

Looking at the question of separation from a general Queensland point of view...there can be no doubt that in a Federated Australian Parliament the views and interests of Queensland would be more likely to have weight if

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<sup>72</sup> Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 976. Emphasis added.

<sup>73</sup> Lorna McDonald, *Rockhampton: A History of City and District*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981: 550.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Townsville Committee to Lord Knutsford, 11 January 1890, *QVP*, 1(1890): 808.

Queensland was one great and increasingly colony as at present...instead of being two or three smaller colonies....As to the question of separation standing over in order that it may be dealt with in a Federal Parliament, there seems to be a good deal in the contention that it may be long a long time before federation is accomplished, nor does it seem that there is any particular reason why, if the Northern Queenslanders desire separation, their desire should be subject to the approval of Tasmania and other distant colonies with which hitherto they have had little or no connection.<sup>76</sup>

In 1898 Queensland's Premier James Dickson restated the fundamental concern that Queensland's position would be weakened if the colony joined the federal compact as three colonies:

The multiplication of small and feeble States does not command itself as a desirable feature in Imperial policy. A divided Queensland would become an insignificant factor, impotent for good, but not incapable of proving a source of embarrassment, in any scheme of Australian or Imperial federation.<sup>77</sup>

Economic factors were a prominent and recurrent feature of all petitions for separation and centred primarily on the disproportionate distribution of the colonies revenues and allocation of consolidated loans. Extensive financial statistics were produced and incorporated to support each region's case of neglect and misappropriation and to demonstrate their financial capacity to maintain a separate government.<sup>78</sup> The impact of separation on Queensland's economic prosperity was the counter response. Morehead canvassed the problem of the difficulty of arranging the division of the loans debentures raised in London by Queensland as a whole. He therefore declared that 'a very serious responsibility to the public creditor is involved in the question of this separation and dismemberment of the colony.'<sup>79</sup> Premier Hugh Nelson in February 1894 made

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<sup>76</sup> Governor Norman to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Knutsford, 7 April 1890, GOV/29, QSA.

<sup>77</sup> Dickson to Governor Lamington, 29 December 1898, QVP, 1(1899): 125.

<sup>78</sup> Doran, 'North Queensland Separatism in the Nineteenth Century.' 228.

<sup>79</sup> Morehead to Governor Norman, 22 May 1890 cited in Voss, *Separatist Movements in Central Queensland in the Nineteenth Century*: 68-69.

reference to Queensland's weakened financial position consequent to the economic depression:

No time could be worse chosen for bringing into prominence a disturbing topic of this nature than the present period, when the united efforts of the whole colony are required to make head against the disastrous effects of a crisis which has hardly yet passed over.<sup>80</sup>

The Colonial Office generally consented to these economic arguments either on the basis that they were a valid claim or that they provided a reasonable means to extricate the Imperial government from action. A Colonial Office minute in response to Nelson's letter demonstrated the latter:

It is desirable to avoid as long as possible questions which provoke controversy locally. The line to take at the present moment seems to me to be that indicated at the conclusion of Mr. Nelson's letter – that the present financial and commercial position of the colony is unfavourable to any scheme of territorial separation.<sup>81</sup>

The Colonial Office to prevent the encouragement of sectional tendencies made use of the progress of the federation movement as a convenient pretext for delaying legislative action on petitions for separation, and ultimately avoided the need to intervene in what was considered a local contention. Imperial interference it was argued was 'inconsistent with the respect which they [the Imperial Government] were bound to show to the legislatures of self-governing colonies.'<sup>82</sup>

The reservation of the Imperial authorities was further assisted by Griffith's 1891-1892 scheme to create separate Provincial Legislatures.

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<sup>80</sup> Nelson to Governor Lamington, 6 February 1894 cited in Voss, *Separatist Movements in Central Queensland in the Nineteenth Century*: 69.

<sup>81</sup> W.M. Mercer, Colonial Office Minute, 5 April 1894, Queensland No. 32, Queensland Original Correspondence, CO234/59, AJCP.

<sup>82</sup> 'Separation Deputation', *Times*, 25 February 1893.



Figure 6.3: *The Boomerang*, 10 October, 1891

Griffith's provincial scheme was first an acknowledgement that some modification of the system under which the colony was administered was required and second it was an attempt to find a compromise that would have had the potential to combine the advantages of decentralisation without destroying the political unity of the colony and the advantages of a central government. A Bill to 'Provide for the Division of the Colony of Queensland into Provinces, and for the Better Government of the Colony' was introduced into parliament in August 1892 and provided for the establishment, in Southern, Central and Northern districts, of separate legislative and executive authorities with full powers of legislation and government.<sup>83</sup> As 'a viable option' to separation Griffith's provincial scheme was

<sup>83</sup> In discussing the proposed Provincial plan William Lennon a Townsville Merchant and advocate of separation remarked to Robert Philp, 'I feel certain Sir H. Parkes and other 'old parliamentary hands' will be irritated by Griffith's proposal to show them the lead in Federation and their vanity will prompt them to thwart

seen, the *Review of Reviews* remarked, as 'the political germ of the Federal Australian Commonwealth.'<sup>84</sup> The North opposed 'Griffith's Federation scheme' arguing that it was not a reasonable substitute to territorial separation and that it should more accurately be titled the 'Brisbane Preservation Bill for it can be plainly seen that its main object is to benefit the south at the expense of the North.'<sup>85</sup> The Bill was however rejected in the Legislative Assembly on the basis of an amendment that objected to the proposed establishment of a Central Province and advocated 'the division of the colony into two provinces'.<sup>86</sup> In August 1892 Griffith successfully reintroduced an amended Bill, which proposed a bi-provincial arrangement with the centre forming part of southern Queensland. In the Legislative Council on the 27 October 1892 'it met with a very short shrift indeed' being rejected by 17 to 9 on technical grounds, that as a measure for the amendment of the Constitution, it had not been carried by a two-thirds majority in the Assembly.<sup>87</sup> Central members bitterly resented their district's exclusion from the scheme, and an 'Indignation meeting' was held in Rockhampton to protest the action where, '[t]hree members of Parliament [were] burnt in effigy and while they were burning...an alderman fired a cannon...and blew them to pieces.'<sup>88</sup> That the North 'had turned dog' on the Centre resulted in an irreparable split of the alliance between the two movements.<sup>89</sup>

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his plans.': Lennon to Sir Robert Philp 15 November 1890, Sir Robert Philp Papers. Series 1, Correspondence Relating to Politics, OM 65 – 32/1B, John Oxley Library.

<sup>84</sup> *Review of Reviews*, Volume 1, No.2, August 1892: 25.

<sup>85</sup> William Lennon to Robert Philp, 15 November 1890, 'Sir Robert Philp OM65-32', John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

<sup>86</sup> A.H. Barlow, cited in McCormack, 'The Politics of Expediency': 144.

<sup>87</sup> *Review of Reviews*, Volume 1, No. 5 November 1892:92; Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty Years*: 523-524.

<sup>88</sup> 'Welcome Home To John Ferguson, ESQ' Reprinted from *The Morning Bulletin*, 21 September 1892, Literature on Federation 1892-1909, MS 5911/12 A.N.L.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

A revival of the now distinct central and northern separation movements followed the failure of Griffith's provincial scheme, and each group re-opened correspondence with the Colonial Office through the submission of 'extraordinarily able and argumentative documents'.<sup>90</sup> Separation as an issue began to wane in North Queensland after 1894 and progressively the North's ambivalence to the South was redirected towards support for Federation for it was argued that it 'offered a solution to Northern problems' by conferring the same benefits as separation.<sup>91</sup> In the same period the movement for federation had stalled in all the colonies as a consequence of political, social and economic dislocation of the 1891-1893 depression.

Contrary to the 1895 revival of the federation movement in the other Australian colonies Queensland remained 'especially lukewarm' to the proposal.<sup>92</sup> Renewed activity however drew forth another evasive answer on separation from the Colonial Office. In January 1896 consistent with the Colonial Office policy of deferment Joseph Chamberlain, the new Secretary for State, postponed a decision on separation until the attainment of federation. While asserting that the question of separation was 'pre-eminently one which should be decided by local agreement' Chamberlain consoled the separatist cause by referring them to the future federal government:

Her Majesty's Government would not be justified in asking the Imperial Parliament to undertake so delicate and difficult task, especially in the face of opposition of a large majority of the representatives of the colony. Most, if not all, of these difficulties will disappear should the several colonies of Australia enter into a federal union at an early date.... then the extension of complete autonomy in purely local matters will be comparatively easy, and the people of Central Queensland will no doubt find the Federal Parliament,

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<sup>90</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty Years*: 528.

<sup>91</sup> Doran, 'North Queensland Separatism in the Nineteenth Century.' 389.

<sup>92</sup> James Garrick to Samuel Griffith, September 1896, 'Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1894 - 1900. MSQ 189', .



when constituted, ready to listen to any reasonable scheme which may be submitted to it.<sup>93</sup>

This outlook diverged significantly from Griffith's 1890 view and the 1891 Commonwealth Bill which both had outlined the difficulties of attaining territorial separation after federation. Informing Parliament of Chamberlain's statement, the Member for Rockhampton, George Curtis stated that 'Separationists desirous of obtaining the management of their own affairs...have been told quite recently by Mr. Chamberlain....that they must look to a future federal parliament for the realisation of their aspirations.'<sup>94</sup> The fortunes of separation were again entwined with those of federation. That the two movements could be seen as complementary bolstered support for federation from both the North and Central districts. A. Heron-Wilson, a Member of the Queensland Legislative Council, asserted in a interview with the *Sydney Morning Herald* in January 1897: '[w]ith regard to Central and North Queensland there is no doubt a number of people would go for Federation on any ground to enable them to get the separation from Southern Queensland they have been asking for so long.'<sup>95</sup> This dual approval of the two movements was not new: Henry Lawson had noted that in Rockhampton, the headquarters of the Central Queensland Territorial Separation League, in 1891 'they Rave for Federation while they Howl for Separation'.<sup>96</sup> Separatist issues however took precedence in the 1896/97 debates on the Federal Enabling Bill.

In 1896 Premier Nelson submitted to Parliament for debate, the Federal Enabling Bill, which provided for the representation of Queensland at the proposed Federal Convention in Adelaide. On the motion for the second reading Curtis moved an

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<sup>93</sup> Chamberlain to Governor Lamington, 15 January 1896, *QVP*, 3 (1898): 828.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *The Bulletin*, 16 January 1897.

amendment to provide direct popular election of delegates rather than the proposed scheme of the government to have the delegates elected by the members of the House of Assembly. Nelson's bill departed substantially from the understanding made at the 1895 Hobart Premier's Conference and as a result he received strong criticism from all Colonial Premiers except John Forrest, the Western Australian Premier, who had adopted a similar scheme.<sup>97</sup> The bill did however provide for the election of delegates on the basis of the three districts, the proportion of five delegates to southern electorates, two for the Central and three for the North.<sup>98</sup> The Legislative Assembly passed the bill, in July 1896. The Legislative Council objected to the fact that both Houses were not involved in the election and sought amendment. The Assembly denied the representative character of the Council as it was a nominee house and consequently refused to amend the bill. The deadlock resulted in the Bill being laid aside.<sup>99</sup>

The veracity with which Nelson put forth the case for federation is however tempered by his overt advocacy of the Federal Council. He believed that the limited compact enacted in the Federal Council, 'sufficed for all practical purposes.'<sup>100</sup> Moreover, in January 1897 at the Federal Council meeting in Hobart Nelson, aided by Queensland's Attorney-General Thomas Byrnes, introduced a motion to make provision for 'the functions, powers, and authority of the Federal

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<sup>96</sup> McDonald, *Rockhampton: A History of City and District*: 551.

<sup>97</sup> Nelson asserted that his action was aimed at sparing the colony the expense of another election so soon after a General election. His objection however at the Hobart Conference to the resolution requiring the approval of the electors of each colony and his suggestion that approval should be obtained 'in such a manner as each colony may prescribe', indicates his intention 18 months prior to the bill being laid before Parliament. Newspaper Clipping undated, 'Federal Convention Papers: Correspondence and Papers from Chief Secretaries of Other Colonies Relating to Federation. 15 June 1889 - 2 March 1900', ; Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 159.

<sup>98</sup> Morrison, 'Federation: The Course of the Movement from the 1890's to 1901', in 'A. A. Morrison Collection. UQFL 27 Box 31', Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

<sup>99</sup> Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 162.

Council of Australasia' to be strengthened by making representation on an elective basis.<sup>101</sup> The motion was strongly debated and was defeated by the casting vote of the Council's President Sir Edward Braddon Tasmania premier. That Nelson acknowledged in November 1896 that 'he did not attach so much importance to the Federal Convention as some people did' positions the separation question as a convenient matter to preclude Queensland's representation at the Convention.<sup>102</sup>

Two further attempts were made in 1897 to pass the Enabling Bill. Central and Northern members again submitted an amendment to have delegates elected through popular election. They asserted that this 'was far more beneficial in the interests of Federation and of Queensland.'<sup>103</sup> Mr Stewart, Member for Rockhampton North, saw the government's proposal as an indication that it was 'afflicted with a disease which might very well be termed 'electrophobia'. They have as much fear of appealing to the country as a mad dog has of drinking water.'<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, as the bill proposed the election of delegates as one division, it was urged that three separate electorates be constituted. Curtis asserted that this would prevent southern Queensland, where 'a considerable portion of whom...are absolutely hostile to Federation', dictating the choice of the colony's representatives through their majority and consequently 'prejudice and disadvantage the people of Central and Northern Queensland who...are in favour of Federation.'<sup>105</sup> Curtis argued that representation would protect their interests and enable the alteration of the new state clause in the Federal Constitution, which

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<sup>100</sup> Edward A. Petherick, *The Australian Colonies in 1896: Three letters addressed to an Investor in Australian Securities, Describing the Country and its Resources, Population, Public Works and Finances: with comments on Federation, the Funding of Public debt, Emigration & c.* London: Effingham Wilson, 1897:55.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas Byrnes, 'Powers of the Council – Proposed Elective Basis', 28 January 1897, *Federal Council of Australasia. Seventh Session, 1897*. 77-102.

<sup>102</sup> Waterson, 'Conflict, Conservation and Continuity: Queensland's Continuous Ministries 1893 –1899': 28.

<sup>103</sup> 6 July 1897, *QPD*, 77 (1897): 210.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*: 211-212.

was 'a distinct menace to the rights, claims, and aspirations of the people of Central and Northern Queensland'.<sup>106</sup> Although Nelson did not object to the three electorates, no such provision was embodied in this Bill and on this ground Curtis moved against it and this was carried by an alliance of separationists, Labour members, and some southern members who opposed the bill as protectionists. As a result Queensland did not participate in the 1897/98 Federal Convention. Nelson claimed that the government had been 'made slaves to the separationists, and nothing else.'<sup>107</sup> Sir James Dickson asserted in May 1899 'One thing is very obvious from the division...that several gentlemen who were Federationist's placed separation before Federation.'<sup>108</sup> This claim was to be played out more fully during Queensland's 1899 federal referendum campaign.

Of the 1897 draft Constitution Sir Henry Norman, by now Queensland's ex-Governor, stated: 'The draft no doubt requires much revision, but whether it will be made more palatable to Queensland after vision than it is at present is doubtful.'<sup>109</sup> For Central Queensland separatists the most indigestible aspect of the Commonwealth bill was the retention of the new state clauses of particular note was Clause 123. This clause provided that 'a new State may be formed by separation of territory from a State, but only with the consent of the Parliament thereof' and was based on Griffith's draft bill of 1891.<sup>110</sup>

The inclusion of Clause 123 was a huge blow for the Central Queensland Territorial Separation League, because the Central district had sent Queensland's

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<sup>105</sup> 29 November 1897, *QPD*, 78 (1898): 1736.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*: 1739.

<sup>108</sup> Morrison, 'Federation: The Course of the Movement from the 1890's to 1901':129.

only petition to the Federal Convention. The petition asked: '[t]hat as an act of simple justice...that provision may be made...for the admission of the present colony of Queensland into the federation as three separate autonomous Provinces or States.'<sup>111</sup> To meet the case of Northern and Central Queensland a clause was proposed, at the Melbourne session of the convention, to reserve the powers held by the Queen 'in respect of the division of Queensland into two or more colonies'.<sup>112</sup> Northern and Central Separation Leagues telegraphed their support for the clause. At this time Barton consulted with the Queensland government. Premier Nelson's reply was that the proposed clause would injure the prospects of federation in Queensland. The clause was as a result dropped and the original New State clause adopted.<sup>113</sup> Curtis stated at a Conference of Central Separation Members in January 1899 that as a result of this 'obnoxious clause....a crisis had been reached in the history of the movement'.<sup>114</sup>

By 1899, the connection between federation and separation was more prominent in the Central districts than in the North, separationists did however compose a significant sector of the northern opposition to the Commonwealth Bill, colloquially referred to as 'Anti-Billites'. The bearing that the separatist issue had in Queensland's consideration of the federal proposal was dramatically illustrated in S.A. Rosa 1899 claim that:

It is not surprising the Queenslanders are not federal enthusiasts, for should any slight disturbance occur in connection with their coloured labour question, or with the agitation for separation, it is very probable that federal

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<sup>109</sup> Norman to Griffith, 6 August 1897, 'Sir Samuel Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1894-1900. MSQ 189'.

<sup>110</sup> Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 975.

<sup>111</sup> 'Petition 51 Adelaide Convention 1897, In favour of admission of Queensland into the Federation as three States', 'Records of the Australasian Federal Convention, 1897-98', R216, National Archives of Australia, Canberra

<sup>112</sup> Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 976.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *The Morning Bulletin*, 19 January 1899.

troops from another State would be employed to invade Queensland and massacre Queenslanders.<sup>115</sup>

In Queensland's July to September 1899 referendum campaign the links between separation and federation were more fully played out in Central Queensland.<sup>116</sup>

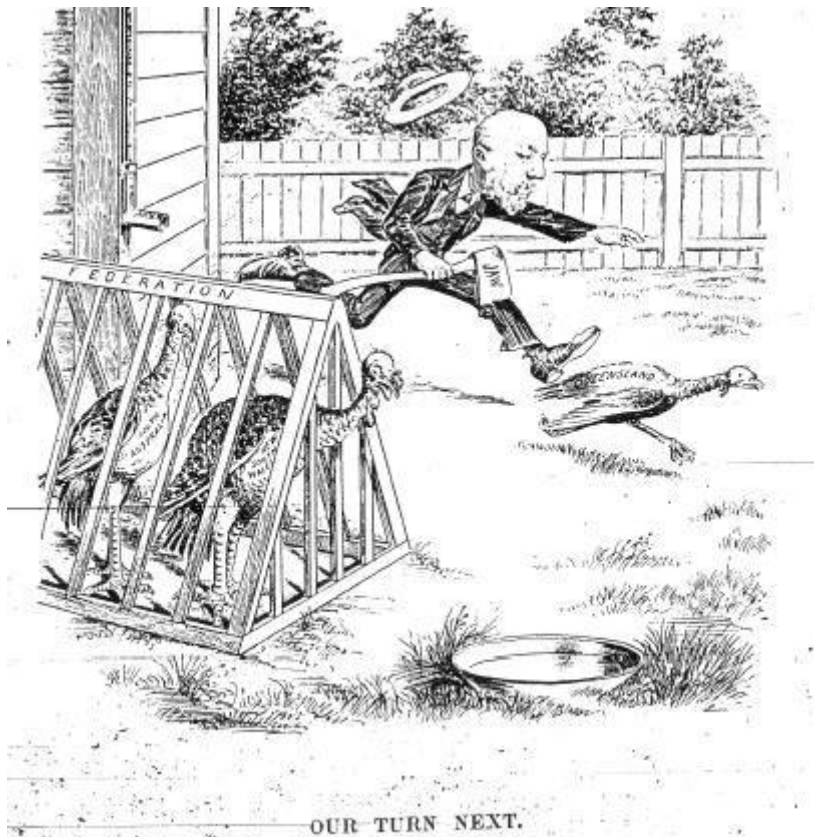


Figure 6.4: The *Worker*, 1 July 1899

The principal topic of the central separationists' campaign was the impact that federation would have on their demands for separation, in particular the pivotal Clause 123. It was as a consequence repeatedly argued that while Central Queensland was in favour of federation, but it could not support the Bill because of 'the injustice, unwisdom, and dangerous' provisions of the 123<sup>rd</sup> clause.<sup>117</sup> Acceptance would extract 'a far greater sacrifice...than any other part of Australia',

<sup>115</sup> S. A. Rosa, *The Federal Bill Analyzed: Being an Examination of the Federal Bill as Amended by the Secret Conference of Premiers*. Sydney: Published by the Author, 1899: 11.

<sup>116</sup> Jenkins, 'Attitudes Towards Federation in Queensland': 180.

and sound the death knell of their prospects of attaining self-government in Central Queensland.<sup>118</sup> Separation it was declared must be paramount over federation: 'If there are any men in Central Queensland they will raise the standard of 'Separation First,' total separation from the iniquitous union forced upon the people of Australia'.<sup>119</sup> So concentrated was the argument on Clause 123 that the *Daily Record* gratefully acknowledged Mr. Penington for sending in 'a letter that does not even mention the 123<sup>rd</sup> clause.'<sup>120</sup> However there was to be little deviation from the separatist's strategy throughout the referendum campaign.

In spite of Dickson's assertion in January 1899 that separation was dead, except for a 'few enthusiasts in Rockhampton who are still crying in the wilderness,'<sup>121</sup> a concerted campaign was mounted by federationists to abate separatist opposition to the bill. The strength of the campaign draws into question Dickson's claim and highlights that separation in Central Queensland was still a political force that needed to be contended with. The Central Queensland Federation League issued several handbills on the topic of separation, in which different argumentative strategies were employed. One argued 'that Federation won't make the Central Queensland Separation problem a whit worse or better than it is now' and directed separatists' attention to the Imperial *Colonial Boundaries Act of 1895* which like Clause 123 also required the consent of a self-governing colony for the alteration of boundaries.<sup>122</sup> An alternative approach was based on the amendment capabilities of Clause 127. The handbill outlined in detail, including a suggested

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<sup>117</sup> E. N. R., *Separation First*: 19.

<sup>118</sup> *The Morning Bulletin*, 4 July 1899.

<sup>119</sup> E. N. R., *Separation First*: 24.

<sup>120</sup> Jenkins, 'Attitudes Towards Federation in Queensland': 188.

<sup>121</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 January 1899 cited in 'James Dickson Papers: OM 67-13', .

<sup>122</sup> 'CENTRAL QUEENSLAND FEDERATION LEAGUE. UNITED AUSTRALIA' in 'Volume of Handbills and Newspaper Cuttings Issued in Queensland, 1899', Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales .

draft amendment, two courses of action that would provide for the division of Queensland into three states after federation had been achieved. The author exploited regional distrust of the southern government to further push the point that the mode of amendment in the Commonwealth bill was likely to be 'favourable to Central and Northern Queensland', it was asserted that '[p]ossibly Mr Dickson did not fully comprehend the effect of the amendment to clause 127 when he gave it his sanction.'<sup>123</sup>

The conflicting arguments raised by separatists' and federationist's' over the likelihood of separation being achieved post-Federation, promoted through the rival dictums of 'Separation First' and 'Federation before Separation', created confusion in the minds of Central voters. Separatists consequently argued that the federation before Separation case represented a deliberate tactic by the southern opponents of separation in their to 'squash' separation and they warned the:

Men of the Centre...do not let these political stockmen, with their loud cracking whips, round you up like so many cattle, and having goaded you to a momentary frenzy, rush you blindly into this Federation paddock. Ware barbed wire!<sup>124</sup>

The question of separation was still of sufficient importance at the end of the referendum campaign to attract eight out of eight letters to the editor in Rockhampton's *Morning Bulletin* on 31 August 1899.<sup>125</sup>

The federalist campaign was well organised and held a definite advantage over the anti-Billite cause. Press coverage and the distribution of numerous handbills provided in regional areas a wide range of coverage of the federalist case. Public

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<sup>123</sup> 'Queensland Divisible into three States After Federation' in *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Scott Bennett, *Federation*. Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1978: 201; McDonald, *Rockhampton: A History of City and District*: 546; *The Morning Bulletin*, 13 August 1899.

<sup>125</sup> Jenkins, 'Attitudes towards Federation in Queensland': 188.



speakers, mostly politicians, including a number of converted advocates of separation first, who performed an important part of the 'yes' case and in their attempts to change the allegiance of voters they often astutely modified their arguments for federation in accordance to regional concerns. In the north Robert Philp, once a prominent member of the Townsville Separation League, drew on the idea that federation, through the establishment of intercolonial free-trade, would confer the same benefits as separation. Philp consequently argued, at a Billite meeting in Townsville in July 1899, that federation would in fact provide the means for achieving separation, because through its introduction of intercolonial free-trade the main reason of the South for retaining the North would be removed.<sup>126</sup> In August 1899, James Drake toured Central Queensland 'as a missionary in the cause of Federation'.<sup>127</sup> While Drake stated later of Rockhampton that the central issue was, 'the 123<sup>rd</sup> clause, morning, noon, and night' he wisely made no specific mention of the clause. Rather he promoted the reform capabilities of the bill and only vaguely prophesied that after federation was achieved, the way would be opened at once for the subdivision of the 'unwieldy states'.<sup>128</sup> Curtis rebuked Drake for his avoidance of the topic in the *Morning Bulletin*, while on the same day 'A Voice from the Back Blocks' bemoaned the federalists' 'labyrinth of irrelevant data' presented to show how easy it would be to attain separate states.<sup>129</sup>

In the latter stages of the campaign the level of disparaging and abusive remarks increased. George Wilkinson questioned whether it was necessary for the 'champions' of the Commonwealth Bill to buttress their case with so many harsh

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<sup>126</sup> *North Queensland Register*, 31 July 1899.

<sup>127</sup> *The Western Champion*, 22 August 1899.

<sup>128</sup> Jenkins, 'Attitudes towards Federation in Queensland': 186; *The Morning Bulletin*, 12 August 1899.

<sup>129</sup> *The Morning Bulletin*, 15 August 1899.

epithets: “Here are a few specimens culled at random...’local aunties;’ ‘flaunting their parochial petticoats;’...’separation-firsters;’ ‘poly glot anti-feds;’ ‘ultra-seps”..<sup>130</sup> The *Queenslander* accused Curtis, who was described by his supporters as ‘the great apostle of Separation First’, of being blinded by his love of separation and further that ‘he must be aware that his proposals would only rouse anger or the ridicule of the other colonies. Nothing would so block separation along Federation lines as the block of Federation by the aid of separatists.’<sup>131</sup> Conspiracy theories also surfaced: Curtis claimed that on good authority he had been told that £6000 had been sent from New South Wales to Brisbane ‘to buy the Queensland vote.’<sup>132</sup> The Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* claimed, in late August, that Philp’s warm advocacy of the Bill was the result of an arrangement between Philp and Dickson whereby, on the establishment of the Commonwealth the North would be granted separation and ‘the Central District lamb be gobbled up between the North and the South’<sup>133</sup> While the *Northern Queensland Register* found the accusation worthy of ridicule, such a claim drew heavily on the Central district’s long-standing resentment of the North. *The Week* also complained that the Premier and the Treasurer were ‘stirring up bitter feeling and strife in the North’.<sup>134</sup> Tensions were clearly mounting, ‘E. N. R’, asserted in his 1899 pamphlet, ‘[i]n Queensland at any rate it is plain...that there is dangerous material ready to take fire if the friction between the South and the Centre and North increases.’<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> *The Morning Bulletin*, 17 July 1899.

<sup>131</sup> *Queenslander*, 27 May 1899

<sup>132</sup> *The Morning Bulletin*, 2 September 1899

<sup>133</sup> *The Morning Bulletin*, 24 August 1899; *North Queensland Register*, 4 September 1899.

<sup>134</sup> *The Week*, 11 August 1899.

<sup>135</sup> E. N. R., *Separation First*: 33; McDonald, *Rockhampton: A History of City and District*: 467.

Separation was but one of a vast array of issues aired in Queensland's ten-week referendum campaign. By the day of polling 2<sup>nd</sup> September, an exceptional atmosphere of tension and excitement in Queensland had developed:

A great fight was to be fought, but not with fire and steel. Queensland stood in the centre of all Australian thought. In her hands rested for the time much of the wider hope of 'That Commonwealth which yet shall be Mistress o'er the Southern Sea!'<sup>136</sup>

The results of the referendum would validate James Drake's August 1899 assessment of the separatist issue: 'opposition is confined to the Separation party in Rockhampton and a few of the wild extremists in the West.' Almost 77 per cent of Rockhampton's eligible electors turned out (the second highest turnout) to vote overwhelmingly against federation.<sup>137</sup> The Central West voted for federation, although its electorates had significantly lower 'YES' votes than similar adjoining electorates to the north and south. Separation and the concentration on Clause 123 clearly affected the attitude of Rockhampton to federation but as a whole Central Queensland separation did not decisively impact on the referendum result. North Queensland alternatively voted 4 to 1 in favour of federation, such a strong result in the north it has been asserted was partly attributable 'to the feeling that an affinity existed between federation and separation, and that federation offered a solution to Northern problems.'<sup>138</sup> Further it may be presumed that die-hard separationists made up a significant proportion of the 16 per cent 'NO' vote in the North.<sup>139</sup> It is therefore evident that despite the persistence and formidable support of the separation movement federation was given primacy over the hope of a separate political existence. Although anti-Billites in the South were almost silent

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<sup>136</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 4 September 1899.

<sup>137</sup> Glen Rhodes, 'The Australian Federation Referenda 1898-1900: A Spatial Analysis of Voting Behaviour.' Unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 1988, Volume 2. Appendices: 120-121.

<sup>138</sup> Doran, 'North Queensland Separatism in the Nineteenth Century': 389.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*: 388.

on the issue of separation throughout the campaign it immediately attacked the outcome of the referendum and claimed that '[t]he tail was wagging the dog. Having failed to obtain separation, the Separationists are now dragging Southern Queensland into a union which it is inclined to regard with rather craven fear.'<sup>140</sup> The bearing that the various separatist causes had on the referendum verdict was practically the last direct influence of the question upon Queensland's politics. The new state clauses of the Commonwealth Constitution affected the decline of separatist activity to that of spasmodic and ineffective action.

Capitalising on Major General Edwards' October 1889 'exposure of the defenceless position of Australia against attack' Sir Henry Parkes initiated 'a new era in the Federal movement.'<sup>141</sup> The necessity for a national scheme for defence became the basis of removing the question of federation from 'the mere sentimental airiness in which it has existed for some years past, and brought it into the region of practical politics.'<sup>142</sup> The 1891 construction of the 'The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia' signalled to many that Australian federation might be 'adopted without delay as the Federal Constitution of Australia.'<sup>143</sup> The reality proved more difficult. Alfred Deakin's 1895 assessment of the situation was that 'The Commonwealth Constitution was a fine structure, but it was like Robinson Crusoe's canoe; when he had built it he had difficulty in getting it into the water.'<sup>144</sup> A significant obstacle to colonies taking any further action on the Commonwealth

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<sup>140</sup> *Review of Reviews*, 15 September 1899.

<sup>141</sup> Wise, 'The Struggle for Union': 285-86.

<sup>142</sup> William McMillan, New South Wales delegate cited in *Official Record of the Proceedings and Debates of the Australasian Federation Conference, 1890*. Melbourne: Robert S. Brain, Government Printer [Reprinted by Charles Potter, Government Printer, Sydney.], 1890: 12.

<sup>143</sup> Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 143.

<sup>144</sup> Deakin cited in Salmon, 'Australian Federation: Its Progress and Its Prospects': 73.

Bill was that they had 'found themselves in a vortex of financial disaster'.<sup>145</sup> The onset of a severe and world wide economic depression sharply turned attention from the federal question towards the more urgent local matter of averting their colony's economic ruin. Whilst the other Australian colonies renewed their federal efforts from 1895 Queensland remained indifferent and the 'federation ship continue[d] to sail on without Queensland'.<sup>146</sup> Throughout the decade local issues persistently eclipsed any consideration of the federal question in Queensland. One issue that influenced the federal idea's progress in Queensland was the perennial demand for the territorial subdivision of the colony. The coexistence of separation and federation, the *Queensland Punch* satirically depicted in July 1891 possessed the hallmarks of an impending conflict:

There's bound to be a row,  
We think we hear it now.  
There's Separation and the Strike,  
There's Federation and the like –  
There's bound to be a row.<sup>147</sup>

Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century the relationship between federation and separation was a recurrent issue for debate. The revival of the federal prospects in the early 1890s saw the relationship become more intimate, with federation repeatedly impinging on separatist attempts to achieve territorial division. To protect the integrity of Queensland's autonomy and economic prosperity was the fundamental underpinning of each successive government's opposition to demands for the subdivision of the colony. Inconsistent with Queensland's lack of interest in the advancement of the federal cause, the purported imminence of federation was used as compelling grounds for the

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<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*: 67.

<sup>146</sup> *Speeches on Australian Federation by the Premiers of Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia. Mr Deakin and Lord Brassey*. 11.

<sup>147</sup> 'Federation', *Queensland Punch*, 1 July 1891.

Imperial Government's deferment of any pronouncement on the separatist petitions of North and Central Queensland. The fatal impediment to the separatist cause was the inclusion of the 'New State' clause in the Constitution Bill, which stated that 'a new state shall not be formed by separation of territory from a State *without the consent* of the Parliament thereof'.<sup>148</sup> Efforts to counter this clause were derailed when an amendment to have Queensland's delegates to the 1897/98 National Australasian Convention elected from three electorates was defeated. Central and northern members with the aid of Labour members in response voted against the Federal Enabling Bill and as a result of 'internal political difficulties' Queensland was not represented at the final and decisive 1897/98 Australasian Convention on the federal question.<sup>149</sup> The retention of the new state clause in the 1897/98 reworked Constitution Bill as Clause 123 prompted Central Queensland separationists to oppose federation on the terms proposed and despite a concerted campaign by federationist's, Rockhampton, the seat of central Queensland's separatist campaign voted decisively against federation. For North Queensland the prospective 'delights of federation' of conferring on the north the same benefits as separation produced an overwhelming majority for federation in the region, which to the consternation of Southern Queensland resulted in Queensland being 'dragged into the Federation by the Northern vote'.<sup>150</sup> In the Legislative Council in October 1899 W.H. Wilson declared that 'the people of Queensland have given their verdict....The time for contention on the question of federation has...passed'.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 976. Emphasis added.

<sup>149</sup> John Plummer, 'The Federal Struggle in Australia', *Globe* (London), 19 April 1898.

<sup>150</sup> W.D. Box, 'Federation. Address to the Queen', 10 October 1899, *QPD*, (1899): 306; 'The Queensland Victory', *Bulletin*, 9 September 1899.

<sup>151</sup> W.H. Wilson, 'Federation. Address to the Queen', 10 October 1899, *QPD*, (1899): 293.

## Conclusion

Queensland is in many respects the most interesting colony of the Australasian group....every phase of colonial life may be found in Queensland. Unfortunately every fault of colonial life may also be found there – and not seldom in an exaggerated form.<sup>1</sup>

The creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 through the political federation of the six Australian colonies 'is a story rich with alternative versions and different perspectives.'<sup>2</sup> The present study offers a new perspective on Queensland's involvement in the Australian Federation Movement. The Queensland chapter has long been one of the unresolved 'dark spots' in the movement's historiography.<sup>3</sup> This study attributes the tendency to 'gloss over' Queensland's part in the movement to fixed elements within the standard analytical approach to the federal topic, principally the enduring historiographical focus on the formal political negotiations that occurred at the various intercolonial federal conferences and conventions in the 1890s. In the foundational texts on the federal achievement these intercolonial proceedings emerged as the significant markers that delineate the movement's progress towards the inevitable accomplishment of nationhood. In documenting the celebrated moves that shaped the destiny of Australia the principal authors, who were also the principal 'actors in the political drama', set aside those features that detracted from the central theme of progress. Those prominent internal colonial issues that shaped a colony's response to the federal idea were marginalised. The basic shortcoming of the conventional account of federation was that it obscured the complexity of the multiple realities within the Australian context in which there existed six distinct and

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<sup>1</sup> 'Queenslander', 'Six Years of Queensland Politics,' *Victorian Review*, 8:1 (May 1883): 61.

<sup>2</sup> Helen Irving, *To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997: 1.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Jenkins noted this in 1979 and the situation remains largely the same in 2006. Jenkins, 'Attitudes Towards Federation in Queensland', vi.

independent 'nations'. In effect the federation movement was artificially lifted out of the individual and dynamic settings of each Australian colony to establish a 'shared' national account of federation. Yet, it is the position of this study that it was within these geographically and politically bounded communities that the federal idea was considered, ignored and ultimately decided upon. There were as a result, as Brian de Garis argued 'six federation movements rather than one'.<sup>4</sup> Despite significant developments in the study of Australian history, the Australian Federation Movement continues to be largely depicted in the orthodox manner with the intercolonial conferences and conventions of the 1890s remaining the principal staging posts for the extended historical narratives. From the Queensland perspective this is particularly problematic. The continued application of this interpretative framework will effectively maintain the marginal status of Queensland in the federal account for fundamentally Queensland's participation in the federal movement did not adhere to the movement's orthodox markers.

Queensland's involvement in the federal movement was contemporarily described as being 'somewhat different from that of the other colonies' and this was primarily because Queensland did not send delegates to the 1893 Corowa Conference or to the 1896 Bathurst Convention or to the final and decisive 1897/98 National Australasian Federation Convention.<sup>5</sup> Yet, despite these absences Queensland did vote in September 1899 to join the federal compact. The standard markers of the movement's progress therefore cease to be tenable in the Queensland context. To construct a more complete depiction of Queensland's part in the political movement

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<sup>4</sup> Garis, 'Some Reflections on the Problems Involved in Writing a History of the Australian Federation Movement,' 31.

<sup>5</sup> Both the Corowa and Bathurst meetings were unofficial gatherings. While Queensland was not officially represented by a political representative at Bathurst two of the 200 attendees were from Gympie Queensland, W.



to create Australia's federal system of government, this thesis has argued that federation was essentially a peripheral matter that had to negotiate a course through and interact with the internal social, political and economic dynamics of the colony of Queensland.

The start date for this study was set by the almost simultaneous occurrence of Queensland attainment of its independence and self-government in December 1859 and the first political consideration of the federal question by Queensland's Executive Council in June 1860. The 1859 – 1901 timeframe, while it is at odds with the usual 1890s focus, presents a distinct period to examine the corresponding (in time) developments of the new colony of Queensland into an independent social, political and economic entity and the federal idea into a nationally defining question. The origins of internal matters that develop into perennial concerns for Queensland are distinguishable, in conjunction with the emergence of a distinctive pattern in Queensland's contemplation of the federal question.

Understanding what type of community Queensland was and was becoming are key components to examining Queensland's participation in the Australian Federation Movement. The foundational period of Australia's youngest colony Queensland had a deep and lasting impact upon the form and manner of the colony's political culture and the subsequent focus and direction of its actions.

In December 1859, after a protracted and bitter campaign, the Moreton Bay District depreciatingly described 'as a miserable hole', gained its territorial separation from

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Chippendall and Captain John Flood. 'Press Cutting', 3 September 1899, 'James Dickson Papers: OM 67-13'; Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 257-60.

the 'Mother' colony New South Wales.<sup>6</sup> Though scant on population, revenue and political experience there was locally boundless optimism over the future prospects of this 'favoured infant nation'.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence there existed from the outset a fervent determination to rapidly overhaul Queensland's delayed start and propel it towards a leading position among the other Australian colonies. This and the under-developed nature of the colony's vast expanse of territory led to the implementation, by successive Queensland governments, of a particularly strident developmental regime. The dynamics of Queensland's entrepreneurial style of politics introduced individualistic policies and qualities, which had an enduring and often turbulent impact on the colony's local political environment.

At the commencement of Queensland's process of development, the land within its territorial borders was the colony's principal asset and pastoralism its only economically productive industry. The vital link therefore between economic prosperity, pastoralism and the continual expansion of the frontier was immediately established and reinforced through favourable land legislation introduced by a pastoralist-dominated parliament. The pace and extent of the resulting 'squattling stampede' instituted characteristic elements that had a lasting though variable bearing on Queensland's consideration of the federal question, that of regionalism and the colony's pragmatic adoption of economically expedient policies.<sup>8</sup>

The pre- and post-separation incursions of pastoralists into Queensland established a decentralised pattern of settlement, one that deviated markedly from the centralist tendencies of the other Australian colonies. Regionalism was the inevitable

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<sup>6</sup> *Moreton Bay Courier*, 6 January 1858 cited in Shaw, 'The 'Tangled Web' of Separation': 1.

<sup>7</sup> 'Queensland', *Moreton Bay Courier*, 5 November 1859.

consequence of the establishment of numerous scattered centres of population in Queensland, each of which held firm affiliations to their own locality and region. The importance of regionalism in Queensland's domestic politics is difficult to exaggerate. It instituted a community-enforced independence within parliament to ensure that the advocacy of an electorate's interests was the local representative's primary concern and not that of party considerations. A 'kaleidoscope pattern of divisions' emerged, in which alliances shifted from issue to issue on the basis of an overriding impulse for development and the potential for regional gain.<sup>9</sup> What transpired was a 'contemptible history' of regional wrangles over the allocation of government-financed public works, the frequent stalling of the legislative process, a growing antagonism between the regions and recurring demands for the territorial division of the colony.<sup>10</sup> Regionalism was a perennial and preoccupying concern in Queensland's domestic affairs.

The second distinctive feature to emerge in this formative phase of Queensland's development was allied to the new colony's desire to lay its economic foundations at an accelerated pace. Within Queensland, the economic success of the pastoral industry had culminated, as stated, in the idea that progress was inseparably linked to the colony's expanding pastoral frontier. The strength therefore of the colonists' demand for the rapid and absolute control over the colony's principal asset, the 140,000,000 acres of land within its borders, fostered government measures that were solely conducive to material advantage and were largely unmindful of principles, moral factors or the long-term effects. The occupation of vast tracts of Aboriginal land had resulted in the whole squatting frontier becoming 'a line of

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<sup>8</sup> George Rankin cited in Thorpe, *Colonial Queensland: Perspectives on a Frontier Society*. 116

<sup>9</sup> Fowler, 'Queensland 1860-1888: Political, Social and Religious Comments': 3.

perpetual conflict'.<sup>11</sup> In this violent contest over the right to occupy the country, Queensland resorted to 'an expedient to which no decent community ought to stoop' a government-sanctioned 'system of native slaughter...merciless and complete'.<sup>12</sup> The vanguard of this policy was the dispersal and retributive work of the Native Mounted Police. Internal and external criticism of this policy and the manner in which it was pursued was of little consequence. Self-government had granted Queenslanders the right to be the administrators of their own affairs and more importantly, impervious to any external interference into its internal dealings. The sanctity of the independence bestowed on Queensland at separation was a potent and pivotal element in Queensland's perception and projection of itself. It was primarily influenced by an 'undercurrent excited by self-interest and selfish fear' invoked after years of neglect under Sydney's administration and the bitter campaign for the colony's territorial separation and resulted in an essentially 'Queensland versus the rest of the world' mindset.<sup>13</sup>

This defensive mindset proved to be an effective counterforce to the mounting criticism over the colony's contentious introduction and maintenance of a highly unfree coloured labour force. Economically rationalised as 'the means by which Queensland might exalt itself into an immensely wealthy State', it was proposed as a temporary expedient to solve the economic problems associated with the colony's chronic labour shortage and to aid the development of the burgeoning sugar

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<sup>10</sup> 'Moreton Bay Separation', *Moreton Bay Courier*, 6 April 1859.

<sup>11</sup> Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland; From 1770 to the Close of the Year 1881. Volume 1*: 93.

<sup>12</sup> G.S. Lang, *The Aborigines of Australia: In Their Original Condition and In Their Relations With The White Men*. Melbourne: Wilson and Mackinnon, 1865: 45-46; Wisker, 'The Victim of Civilisation,' 540-51; Raymond Evans, 'Musketry and Terror': The Pattern of European Conquest', Evans, Saunders, and Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination. Third Edition*. 47-54.

<sup>13</sup> Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland*: 253.

industry.<sup>14</sup> The internal political, social and economic repercussions of Queensland's 1863 adoption of a coloured labour policy were enduring and extensive. The part that the labour trade played in Queensland legislation and administration extended over forty years. It was a subject Charles Bernays stressed that 'could by no means be overlooked when relating the political history of the State.'<sup>15</sup> The force of the issue was such that its impact was far-reaching and extended into the wider political and social realms of the other Australian colonies and into the Imperial domain. Moreover, it permeated the broader question of political federation in a dynamic yet varied manner.

Queensland's first recorded deliberation on the question of a federal union between the Australian colonies was undertaken in June 1860 and in view of the close proximity of this date to the initiation of the colony's independence it was not surprising that the Executive Council 'entertained serious doubts' over the federal idea as it was feared that a central government 'might...tend to limit the complete independence of the scattered communities peopling this continent one of the other.'<sup>16</sup> The evident reluctance of the Council to consider a proposal that would involve the relinquishment of any of Queensland's newly gained authority became a characteristic trait of Queensland's involvement in the federation movement but it was not a stance peculiar to Queensland. Each of the Australian colonies adopted a similar rationale for their disinterest in the Victorian proposal for an intercolonial conference on the federal question. Responsible government was too new and the colonial administrations too pre-occupied with the business of domestic politics to

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<sup>14</sup> Nicholson, 'The Principles Which Ought to Regulate the Determination of the Political and Municipal Boundaries and Divisions of the Colonies,' 295.

<sup>15</sup> Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859-1919) Years*. 64.

<sup>16</sup> Executive Council Minute, 25 June 1860, 'Executive Council Minutes', PRV8112/1/1, QSA.

consider an abstract idea that may weaken their autonomy. Self-government, it was contended, had already bestowed on them individually 'all the elements of national life and prosperity'.<sup>17</sup> Each as a consequence had cultivated their own distinct requirements and interests and politically and economically demonstrated their intent to maintain an autonomous and separate existence.

In this framework of separateness of development the focus and direction being initiated in the new colony of Queensland corresponded with that undertaken earlier in the other Australian colonies. In particular Queensland's narrow and self-interested focus on its internal development, its implementation of policies that were framed solely in accordance with its own immediate interests and informed by the overriding objective of dignifying Queensland. This study has argued that Queensland was at an earlier stage in the colonising process and this set Queensland's vision of national progress on a far narrower economic provincial focus than that of the more established southern colonies which yielded a developing broader national Australian idea of progress canvassed in the emerging concept of political federation.<sup>18</sup>

Isolationism was however a characteristic stance of each colonial government and it was preserved through the evident tensions between the colonies, which the *Brisbane Courier* argued sprang 'from precisely the same causes that have produced wars between independent nations – rivalry, jealousy, and conflicting interests.'<sup>19</sup>

Equating the Australian situation to that of the various rival nationalities of Europe

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<sup>17</sup> Parkes, 'An Australian Nation': 330.

<sup>18</sup> Queensland's earlier stage of development has been compared with that of the southern colonies on the east coast. Western Australia presents as a colony at a comparable stage of development to Queensland. Not surprisingly at the 1891 Federal Convention the newly proclaimed self-governing colony of Western Australia was reluctant to give up any of its newly won autonomy by federating with the more populous east coast colonies. Refer to Brian de Garis, 'Western Australia', Irving (ed), *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*. Oakleigh: Cambridge University Press, 2001:286-325.

was a common contemporary device that decisively demonstrated the colonies perception of themselves as distinct nationalities within the Australian continent. In this environment the federal idea not surprisingly had a 'painful and languid existence'.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the evident failings of the initial proposals for federation this early period does contribute a distinctive character to the federal account. In a broad sense the depiction of each colony's stalwart identification as an independent entity develops a fuller appreciation of the true extent of the difficulties that had to be overcome. More specifically, it established that the deliberative process on the federal question would occur within the contexts of each colony. Absorbed by local matters and occupied with questions of provincial interest each assessed the federal proposal in terms of the benefit it would bring the colony weighed against what would be surrendered. Thus Queensland had failed in 1870 'to discover what Federation, at present, would effect for this colony'.<sup>21</sup>

By the early 1880s Queensland was being both lauded as the 'most enterprising of the Australian colonies' and censured for so clearly marking out 'a colonising career dissimilar from that of her elder sisters'.<sup>22</sup> The basis for both these views was the 'astonishing' pace and form of Queensland's development.<sup>23</sup> The period of Sir Thomas McIlwraith's premiership (1879-1883) marked the resounding triumph of Queensland's 'urgent, underlying and inextinguishable' development ethos.<sup>24</sup> The force of McIlwraith's character was portrayed in the similarity of the descriptive terms

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<sup>19</sup> 'A Federal Constitution For Australia', *Brisbane Courier*, 14 December 1864.

<sup>20</sup> Foster, 'Fallacies of Federation,' 79-115.

<sup>21</sup> Hon. Arthur Macalister, 20 November 1870, *QPD*, 10 (1870): 225-227.

<sup>22</sup> 'Editorial', *Times*, 17 April 1883; Parkes, 'An Australian Nation,' : 333.

used by both his admirers and critics: strong, bold, able and determined. To one anonymous supporter he was much more:

Australia has not so far produced an abler or more honourable statesman than Sir Thomas Mcllwraith. We may look around in vain among Colonial statesmen of the past or present, for even his equal in grandeur of intellect, in comprehensiveness, and originality of design, in fixity of purpose, in decision of action, and all the premier qualities essential to the successful ruler of a young country.<sup>25</sup>

Queensland was to Mcllwraith a great enterprise, and his declared intent to institute 'a much greater development of this country than there had been in the past' appealed to and reflected the developmental aspirations of Queenslanders.<sup>26</sup> Progress in Queensland had and continued to be measured in economic terms and Mcllwraith's 'almost magical' results in restoring the colony by 1881 to a state of prosperity restored 'hope that Queensland will soon be recognised as the Colony of Australasia.'<sup>27</sup>

In Mcllwraith's program for the colony's material development two elements proved corrosive to his strong political position, the land grant railways scheme and the proposed introduction of Indian Coolie labour. In the turbulent political environment it was the question of Coolie labour that proved to be the more prolonged and volatile issue, for it prompted a social debate over what type of society Queensland was to be. Queensland approached a junction in its development in which the resilient model of economically expedient policies, to generate and maintain rapid progress, came under challenge by a new Liberal/white labour alliance, primarily on the basis that such policies lacked social accountability. Mcllwraith's policies exemplified the

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<sup>23</sup> 'Editorial', *Times*, 17 April 1883.

<sup>24</sup> Oswald, 'Government, and Queensland Politics,' 1-8.

<sup>25</sup> 'Anon.' 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith,' 165-66.

<sup>26</sup> Mcllwraith cited in Dignan, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith: His Public Career and Political Thought. A Short Essay': 123.

<sup>27</sup> 'Progress of the Colony', *Pugh's Almanac*. Brisbane: Gordon and Gotch, 1882: 78.



Queensland maxim that progress and economic prosperity were synonymous, and within this dynamic the creation of wealth through greater development was the principal objective.<sup>28</sup> In the turbulent course of events that transpired regionalism became more virulent. An interregional divide developed over the colony's continued maintenance of a coloured labour force allied to each region's stage of development, which exemplified the divergent interests of the southern and northern regions of the colony. The more developed south voiced its great anxiety and alarm over the Coolie labour proposal while in the north the employment of coloured labour was portrayed as the secret of their success and an indispensable feature for their future prospects. Intensifying this internal debate was the negative public campaign in the southern colonies and Britain against Queensland's ongoing importation of 'a race of island unfortunates, who serve the purpose of making money for their employers'.<sup>29</sup> Humanitarian and missionary groups depicted Queensland's use of an indentured coloured labour force as 'the slave trade under a new name'.<sup>30</sup> Censure from the southern colonies centred on a broader concern over the type of society that was being permanently established in the northern colony. It was therefore argued that the character of the institutions that had been developed in Queensland deviated socially, morally, and economically from the other Australian colonies. Queensland remained defiant to these external criticisms of its internal policies, epitomising the inviolability of colonial independence, which had reserved to each colony 'the right to be masters of the situation'.<sup>31</sup> Yet it was apparent by 1883 that the external and internal pressure groups would continue to rail against Queensland's stance on

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<sup>28</sup> Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith: His Public Career and Political Thought. A Short Essay': 123-28.

<sup>29</sup> Wisker, 'The Victim of Civilisation': 544.

<sup>30</sup> McIlwraith to Governor Kennedy, 20 June 1882, 'Western Pacific. Labour Trade in the Western Pacific', 'Commodore Wilson's Report of the Labour Trade in the Western Pacific: Correspondence Respecting', *JLC*, 31:2 (1882): 449-482.

<sup>31</sup> Arthur Macallister, Queensland's Agent General in London, cited in Archer, 'Queensland: Her History, Resources, and Future Prospects,' 295.

coloured labour and that Queensland was under Imperial and inter-colonial scrutiny. By May 1882 Mcllwraith's ministry was considered to be 'in their dying and decaying days'.<sup>32</sup> Against this backdrop Mcllwraith took in April 1883 the 'summary step' of annexing the eastern half of New Guinea action which incongruously 'opened the door' to a concerted colonial effort on the federal question.<sup>33</sup>

Mcllwraith consistently presented his reasoning for his independent and unauthorised action was that it was a defensive measure to thwart German occupation of New Guinea. The irregular and impulsive nature of the act however raised suspicions of an ulterior motive that the annexation was undertaken solely to obtain a new field for the recruitment of coloured labour to relieve the colony's sugar planter's acute labour shortage. The Imperial government, encouraged by a concerted campaign outlining Queensland's 'unfitness' to govern New Guinea, placed great weight on the indictment against Queensland and it featured prominently in the Imperial refusal to sanction the annexation. This study contends that it would be unlikely that Mcllwraith (considered a 'masterful' statesman alert to the intense scrutiny of and campaign against the colony's employment of a coloured labour force) would choose such an overt act based on an exceptionally vulnerable motivation. Rather it is proposed that a more feasible motive for Mcllwraith's 'bold and daring' exploit was affiliated to his 'barnacle tenacity' to stay in office.<sup>34</sup> The purported threat of Germany's colonising ambition in New Guinea afforded Mcllwraith with an opportunity to redress his politically precarious position by captivating political support through a 'bold stroke' and diverting local attention from important internal matters. The chain of events it initiated was more decisive.

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<sup>32</sup> William Walsh, 'Indian Immigration Act', *QPD*, 36 (1882): 150

<sup>33</sup> Craig, 'The Griffith Policy,' 204.

From a local perspective the annexation of New Guinea can be classified as a watershed in Queensland politics. Critical and public scrutiny of Queensland's labour policy provoked by the annexation and the colony's consequent labelling as a 'nigger establishment' instilled an ardency into and broadened the appeal basis of the internal campaign to abolish this socially contaminating policy. The question of coloured labour emerged as a decisive factor in Samuel Griffith's resounding election victory. Under Griffith's leadership, Queensland's new Liberal Government introduced radical labour reforms to address these mounting concerns and to 'vindicate the fair name of the colony, and to cleanse it from the disgrace cast upon it by the Slave Ministry of Mr. McIlwraith.'<sup>35</sup>

The second significant consequence of the New Guinea episode was the impetus it gave to the federal cause. There emerge an evident difference in what the Imperial government regarded as the central issue and that of the colonial perspective. The question of coloured labour had factored prominently in the Imperial government's decision, but the more contentious issue for the Australian colonies was that the Imperial Government had dismissed an urgent and seemingly valid colonial case for Imperial protection from the danger of foreign encroachment. Britain's refusal to protect the colonies in conjunction with increased French activity in the Pacific tendered defence as a pressing basis for combined and concerted colonial action to address external security concerns. McIlwraith incorporated the purported imminent danger posed by France and the Imperial government's proposition that 'if the colonies desired an extension of their territory it would be better for them to become federated' to advocate that a convention be convened 'to discuss the basis upon

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<sup>34</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 10 November 1883.

<sup>35</sup> 'Editorial', *Northern Miner*, 25 January 1884.

which a Federal Government could be constituted.<sup>36</sup> Despite the durability of intercolonial tensions, the Australasian Convention achieved its principal objective of establishing some sort of permanent federal organisation. The unanimous decision in December 1883 to establish the Federal Council of Australasia constituted the first concrete and practical advancement on the federal question after more than thirty years of rhetoric and should be acknowledged as 'the first stepping stone to a grand union of the various Colonies of Australia.'<sup>37</sup> The federal beginning had been deliberately modest so as to avert colonial suspicions of any encroachment on the authority of their independent legislatures. The symbolism of the Federal Council achievement was undermined by the resurgence of the intercolonial hostilities between New South Wales and Victoria, which resulted in New South Wales' defiant refusal to join the Council. The London *Times* astutely noted that 'Australasian Federation has been born perhaps rather prematurely.'<sup>38</sup> Britain's establishment of a protectorate over the southeastern portion of New Guinea in November 1884 though it validated the colonies' original fears of foreign encroachment it additionally removed the urgency that had induced the colonial demand for combined action. As a result at the time of the first inaugural meeting of the Federal Council in January there existed in Queensland no understanding of what were the motivating forces that led to the Council's establishment or its procedural purpose. The pressure of local issues provoked by Griffith's progressive reforms rendered the federal topic of little consequence when compared to the more immediate concerns of the colony.

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<sup>36</sup> Despatch No.37 'Declining to Annex New Guinea,' 11 July 1883, 'Correspondence Respecting Annexation of New Guinea', PRV7192/1/1 QSA; 'Extract from the Minutes of Proceedings of the Executive Council of Queensland' 17 July 1883, 'New Guinea Protectorate: Despatches and Other Papers Relating to Establishment and Administration', *Journals and Printed Papers of the Federal Council*. 1 (1886): 33

<sup>37</sup> 'Editorial', *Argus*, 5 December 1883; Grant Webster discussion on Royal Colonial Institutes paper by Powell, 'New Guinea and the Western Pacific,' 7-38.

<sup>38</sup> 'Editorial', *Times*, 9 December 1885.

Sir Samuel Griffith's 1883-1888 premiership represented an important juncture in Queensland's developmental process. In this period broader social considerations came to supersede economic prosperity as the principal gauge of Queensland's progress. The definitive marker of this juncture was the setting of a time limit for the end of Queensland's exploitation of a highly unfree coloured labour; black labour, it was declared, was to come to end. Griffith's platform of political and social reforms, though lauded as a entire revolution in the government, in effect deepened old divisions and engendered a new set of political, social and economic issues that directed and maintained attention internally. The particular focus of this study was the tripartite intersection of the coloured labour question, the politicisation of white labour and the conversion of northern grievances into a formally organised separation movement. The political and social instability produced by these three but interrelated internal issues was such that it enforced a narrow domestic focus and resulted in Queensland being assuming a somewhat ambiguous position in the renewed 1890s federal movement. On the broader national Australian front, the onset of separatist agitation contentiously allied to coloured labour and the development of a labour agenda furthered the emergent rationality of racial homogeneity as an Australian ideal and its consequent role as a practical and motivational argument for federation. The 'grave' political and social concern intrinsic in the north's demand for separation was that 'a colony of caste' would be established in North Queensland, one that would be antagonistic to the homogenous development of a white Australia. The rhetoric of race against coloured intruders had created amongst the autonomous colonial entities a semblance of cohesion.

The 1890s did constitute the most concerted and progressive phase of the federal movement; yet this was not the case in Queensland where it was acknowledged that 'there was no colony in which federation has received such scurvy treatment as our own'.<sup>39</sup> The volatility of local issues had continued to eclipse any consideration of the federal question. An additional component that influenced Queensland's position on the matter was the concurrent existence of the separation, labour and federation movements. Separation and federation were closely linked throughout the 1890s. The Queensland and Imperial governments employed the impending federation of the Australian colonies as the means to defer any serious consideration or decision on the petitions from northern and central Queensland for their territorial separation. Central Queensland's open opposition to federation as a consequence of the 'gross injustice' of the new state clauses was decisively demonstrated in their parliamentary bloc of the Federal Enabling Bill that resulted in Queensland being absent from the 1897/98 National Australasian Convention.<sup>40</sup> North Queensland's ambivalence was converted on the basis that 'Federation offered a solution to Northern problems' by conferring the same benefits as separation.<sup>41</sup> The strength of the yes vote in the north was a decisive factor in Queensland being 'dragged into Federation'.<sup>42</sup> On the federal proposal the Labour party in Queensland shifted from indifference to suspicion to support. In the parliamentary deliberations of the various Federal Enabling Bills labour members pressed for electoral reform and bargained their support for federation on the condition that one-man, one-vote be introduced. The strategy failed to elicit the desired reform in local parliament but extracted a promise from Dickson to abolish plural voting if the colony voted for federation. The prospect

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<sup>39</sup> 'The Appeal to the People', *Queenslander*, 6 May 1899.

<sup>40</sup> McDonald, *Rockhampton: A History of City and District*. 550.

<sup>41</sup> Doran, 'North Queensland Separatism in the Nineteenth Century.' 389.

<sup>42</sup> 'The Queensland Victory', *Bulletin*, 9 September 1899

of attaining universal suffrage and the abolition of plural voting through the new federal government enacted labour's last minute conversion from opposition to general support. Regional and sectional objectives were the deciding force in Queensland's narrow affirmative vote to enter the federal compact. Queensland, Premier Dickson declared to the other premiers, 'no longer shall Queensland...suffer the reproach of being laggard in all that conduces to Australian nationhood and to...federal co-operation...she is determined to take her status as one of the original States of United Australia.'<sup>43</sup>

The federation of the Australian colonies 'did not take place in a vacuum' and this factor is particularly evident within Queensland. The colony's internal and perennial issues of coloured labour, separation and the emergent labour movement individually and in combination carved out a distinctive obstacle course for the federal question to negotiate.<sup>44</sup> Queensland was as a result not so much a 'maverick' colony (for it did not make a concrete decision to resolutely oppose the federal proposition), but rather the colony's indifference to the idea of federation was linked to its developmental process. Queensland was 'but an infant' compared to the older more established colonies and had been too deeply engaged in the practical business of developing its immense territory and addressing the internal matters that its developmental policies raised to assume an active or leading role in a question that it essentially feared would weaken its authoritative control 'to be [the] masters of their situation.'<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> 'The Premier and Federation', *Brisbane Courier*, 5 September 1899.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Ely, 'Australian Federation, Religion, and James Bryce's Nightmare,' *Australian Cultural History*: 16 (1997/98): 151-69.

<sup>45</sup> Christison, *Our Colonies Suffering A Recovery*. 5; Arthur Macalister cited in Nicholson, 'The Principles Which Ought to Regulate the Determination of the Political and Municipal Boundaries and Divisions of the Colonies,' 338.

The final convulsion in Queensland's involvement in the Federal movement was that the principal domestic impediments to the colony's consideration of the federal question in the 1890s, in particular the separation and labour movements, emerged as decisive factors in Queensland's narrow affirmative vote to join the federal union. Queensland's new premier Robert Philp believed in February 1901 that 'the Commonwealth had a great future before it' but he hoped that 'there would be no nasty legislation; that they would go slow.'<sup>46</sup> By February 1902 Philp was 'thoroughly disgusted' and 'up in arms against the Commonwealth.'<sup>47</sup> The question of coloured labour, which had most decisively represented Queensland's enforcement of and devotion to its independence, emerged as the first challenge in State-Commonwealth relations.

The Federal Parliament passed as its first legislative measure in October 1901 the *Pacific Islands Labourers Act*, which effectively terminated Queensland's employment of coloured labour. The prospect of a 'White Australia' had been a decisive force in the federal accomplishment and the abolition of coloured labour was a predicted and much anticipated event. The first Federal Act provoked emphatic protest from Queensland who equated the speed of the Federal Parliament's action to that of 'a bull in a china shop tossing and going to show the infinitude of their power, without any more consideration or responsibility than a lunatic with a lighted torch near a haystack.'<sup>48</sup> Under challenge was Queensland's much prized independence to be not only the administrators of their own affairs but resistant to the

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<sup>46</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 7 February 1901.

<sup>47</sup> Lord Lamington to Sir Samuel Griffith, 7 February 1902, 'Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1900-1903. MSQ 190', Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales .

<sup>48</sup> Judge James Boucant to Sir Samuel Griffith, 15 August 1901, *Ibid.* .



external interference into its internal dealings. Alfred Deakin inventively described the situation:

One cannot have an omelette without breaking a few eggs nor a Federal Union without sacrifice of State independence. Our Provincial Parliaments are...beginning to realise this, and to rue the deprivation of power and prestige from which they are suffering....they are now taking up arms against the Frankenstein they were compelled to create.<sup>49</sup>

The problem, Queensland's most renowned federalist Sir Samuel Griffith reflected, was not the idea of federation itself but the way in which the Federal authority had been put into operation.<sup>50</sup> Fulfilled to many in Queensland was the prophesy 'that the [federal] step is a wrong one, fraught with terrible disaster and ill in the future to come for us. [Queensland] will live to repent the day when they voted in favour of the Commonwealth bill.'<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Alfred Deakin, 'Commonwealth Versus States', 13 August 1901, Deakin, *Federated Australia*: 66-70.

<sup>50</sup> Admiral Lord Charles Scott to Griffith, 24 June 1902, 'Sir Samuel Walker Griffith Papers. Correspondence, 1900-1903. MSQ 190', .

<sup>51</sup> A.H. Barlow, 'Federation. Address to the Queen', 10 October 1899, *QPD*, (1899): 294.



## Biographical Appendix

### **Sir Charles Cowper (1807-1875)**

Pastoralist, New South Wales Member of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council and Premier. Cowper was elected in 1843 at the first elections under the new Constitution for the County of Cumberland. Throughout his political career he held positions in the Legislative Council 1843-1850, 1860 and was Premier of five occasions, August – October 1856, January 1858 – October 1859, January 1861- October 1863, February 1865-January 1866, January - December 1870. In December 1870 he was appointed Agent General for New South Wales. Cowper opposed the federal ideas of Earl Grey and persistently maintained his aversion to the idea of political federation.<sup>52</sup>

### **John Douglas (1828-1904)**

Squatter, Queensland Member of the Legislative Assembly, Premier and Federalist. Member of New South Wales Legislative Assembly 1859-1861; Member of Queensland Legislative Assembly 1863-9 and 1875-1879; Premier 8 March 1877 – 21 January 1879; Queensland Agent General 1869-1871; Administrator and Government Resident Thursday Island 1885-1904. Though Douglas was never bestowed any level of acknowledgement comparable to Queensland's other prominent federalist's in particular Samuel Griffith, he can credibly be advanced as Queensland's earliest and most persistent advocate for federation. In 1900 Douglas asserted that his 'first declaration for federation' was a 'flaming paragraph' in his 1859 address to the electors of Darling Downs. Throughout the 1880s and the 1890s in particular he regularly made supportive speeches and statements on the federal topic in an endeavour to enliven Queensland's consideration of the question.<sup>53</sup>

### **Sir Charles Gavan Duffy (1816-1903)**

Irish nationalist, Victorian statesman and federalist emigrated from Great Britain at the end of 1855. In 1856 he was elected to Victoria's first parliament under responsible government. Duffy himself reflected on his federal labours throughout the late 1850s and 1860s: 'In the Federal movement, I not merely took the principal part but practically did everything.' Charles Pridham criticised Duffy's approach in 1876 – 'A man with half an eye recognises in Sir C. G. Duffy...the mere rhetorician, simple that and nothing more.' Duffy relegated the obstacles to federation as 'insignificant' to the grand fundamental goal and insisted upon the necessity of promoting a national feeling. The association between Duffy's advocacy of federation and his later arrival in Victoria was that it arguably freed him of provincial pride and consequently enabled a broader range of vision. Duffy's last public action on the federal question was his chairmanship of the 1870 Royal Commission 'to

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<sup>52</sup> John M. Ward, 'Sir Charles Cowper', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 3 (1851-1890): 474-479.

<sup>53</sup> Waterson, *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929*. 49; John Douglas, *Past and Present of the Torres Strait*. Brisbane: The Outridge Printing Company, 1900.

consider and report upon the necessity of a Federal Union of the Australian colonies'.<sup>54</sup>

### **Carl Feilberg**

As the political reporter for the *Brisbane Courier* and the *Queenslander* Feilberg had been a close observer of the dynamics in Queensland's political arena. In 1881, in defence of an allegation of slander against him Feilberg wrote to McIlwraith in order to clear himself of the charge and the two became correspondents. In mid-1882, Feilberg moved to Melbourne to take the position of Sub-editor for the Melbourne *Argus*, in it's testimonial to Feilberg the *Queensland Punch* stated that 'Carl has influenced public opinion in this colony to an extent that probably very few are aware of....The literary pretensions of Queensland are considerably diminished by his severance from the colony'.<sup>55</sup>

### **Samuel Walker Griffith (1845-1920)**

Born in Merthyr Tydvil, South Wales on 21 June 1845. At the age of nine Griffith and his family came to Australia and first took up residence at Ipswich, then Moreton Bay settlement, followed by Maitland New South Wales and settling permanently in Brisbane in 1860. His education was partly received at a private school in Sydney and partly at the Maitland High School. In 1863 he was awarded a BA degree with first class honours from the Sydney University. In 1867 after two years in Europe on a Mort Travelling Scholarship Griffith was called to the Queensland Bar and established a lucrative legal practise. In 1870 he completed a MA degree at the Sydney University. Griffith first entered parliament at the age of 26 as the Member for East Moreton in March 1872. His ambition was quite apparent and quickly rewarded by his appointment to the position of Attorney General in the Macalister Cabinet in August 1874, and his rise to the leadership of the Liberal party in January 1879. Griffith remained a Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly until 1893 principally representing the seat of North Brisbane. He was the uncontested leader of the Liberal Party until 1893, Premier from November 1883-June 1888, August 1890-March 1893 when he retired from office to assumed the position of Chief Justice of Queensland a position he held until 1903 when appointed the first Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia retiring in July 1919.<sup>56</sup>

### **William Edward Hearn (1826-1888)**

Political Economist, University Lecturer whose notable students included H.B. Higgins, Isaac Isaacs and Alfred Deakin and Members of the Victorian Legislative Council. In 1854 the Irish born Hearn was appointed first professor of modern history, literature, political economy and logic at the newly established University of Melbourne. His appointment as Queen's Counsel in

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<sup>54</sup> Duffy to Sir Henry Parkes, 13 October 1891, 'Parkes Correspondence, Letters from', A885 - 932 Mitchell Library, Sydney 51 (A921): 135-8; Charles Pridham to Sir James McCulloch, 28 June 1876, 'Papers Relating to the Federation of Australia. MS10037', State Library of Victoria MSB 130/1; Joy E. Parnaby, 'Sir Charles Gavan Duffy', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984: 4:109-13.

<sup>55</sup> 'Punch's Testimonial to a Journalist', *Queensland Punch*, 1 July 1882; Dignan, 'Sir Thomas McIlwraith: His Public Career and Political Thought. A Short Essay': 68.

<sup>56</sup> Waterson, *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929*: 74; 'Death of Sir Samuel Griffith', *Queenslander*, 14 August 1920.

1886 was a recognition of his scholarly work. Active in the public affairs Hearn published pamphlets, lectures and wrote extensively though anonymously for the Melbourne *Argus*.<sup>57</sup>

### **Thomas Mcllwraith (1835-1900)**

Born in Ayr Scotland in May 1835 and educated at the Ayr academy and the University of Glasgow, where he trained as a civil engineer. Persuaded in 1854, by his older brother John's economic success in Melbourne, to immigrate to Victoria. Mcllwraith's sixteen-year involvement in Victoria laid the foundational basis for his later success, in particular the profitable intersection between his practical ability, enterprise and railways. Between 1856 and 1860 he was employed by Victorian railway department and from 1860 to 1864 as chief engineer for the large railway contractors Cornish and Bruce. Mcllwraith profited professionally and financially from his significant involvement on the Melbourne to Bendigo and Melbourne to Sandhurst railway lines. To Mcllwraith especially, it was said, was 'due the honour of carrying through to completion large and important works which that firm were then engaged.' His elevation to partner and after the death of one of the firm's principals, to senior partner further highlighted his key role. Mcllwraith invested in 1864, in partnership with Joseph C. Smyth, his profits from railway construction into eight runs in the Maranoa district of Queensland. By 1870 he had permanently diverted his capital and energy from Victoria to Queensland. In November 1882 he was conferred the Imperial honour of a knighthood.<sup>58</sup>

### **Sir Henry Parkes (1815-1896)**

Parkes 'first came to notice' as an advocate for federation in 1867, at a conference held in Melbourne to discuss postal communication with Europe. In 1875 'The Essayist', in the first of a series of articles published in the *Queenslander* entitled 'The Federation of Australia', judged Parkes as possessing more 'statesmanlike qualities...than any other Australian Minister', and in his position as premier of New South Wales he 'could give full weight to his opinions.' Parkes' ministry resigned in January 1875, however Parkes returned to the position in March – August 1877 and 21 December 1878 – 4 January 1883.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> J.A. La Nauze, 'William Edward Hearn,' Bede Nairn, Geoffrey Serle, and Russel Ward, (eds.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography: 1851-1890*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969: 370-72.

<sup>58</sup> Dignan, 'Sir Thomas Mcllwraith: His Public Career and Political Thought. A Short Essay': 4-7; Waterson, *Personality, Profit and Politics: Thomas Mcllwraith in Queensland, 1866-1894*. 10.

<sup>59</sup> Quick and Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth*: 103-04; A.W. Martin, 'Sir Henry Parkes', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 5: 399-406; Arthur Jose, *Builders and Pioneers of Australia*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1928: 90; 'The Essayist', 'The Federation of Australia. No.1', *Queenslander*, 9 January 1875.



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